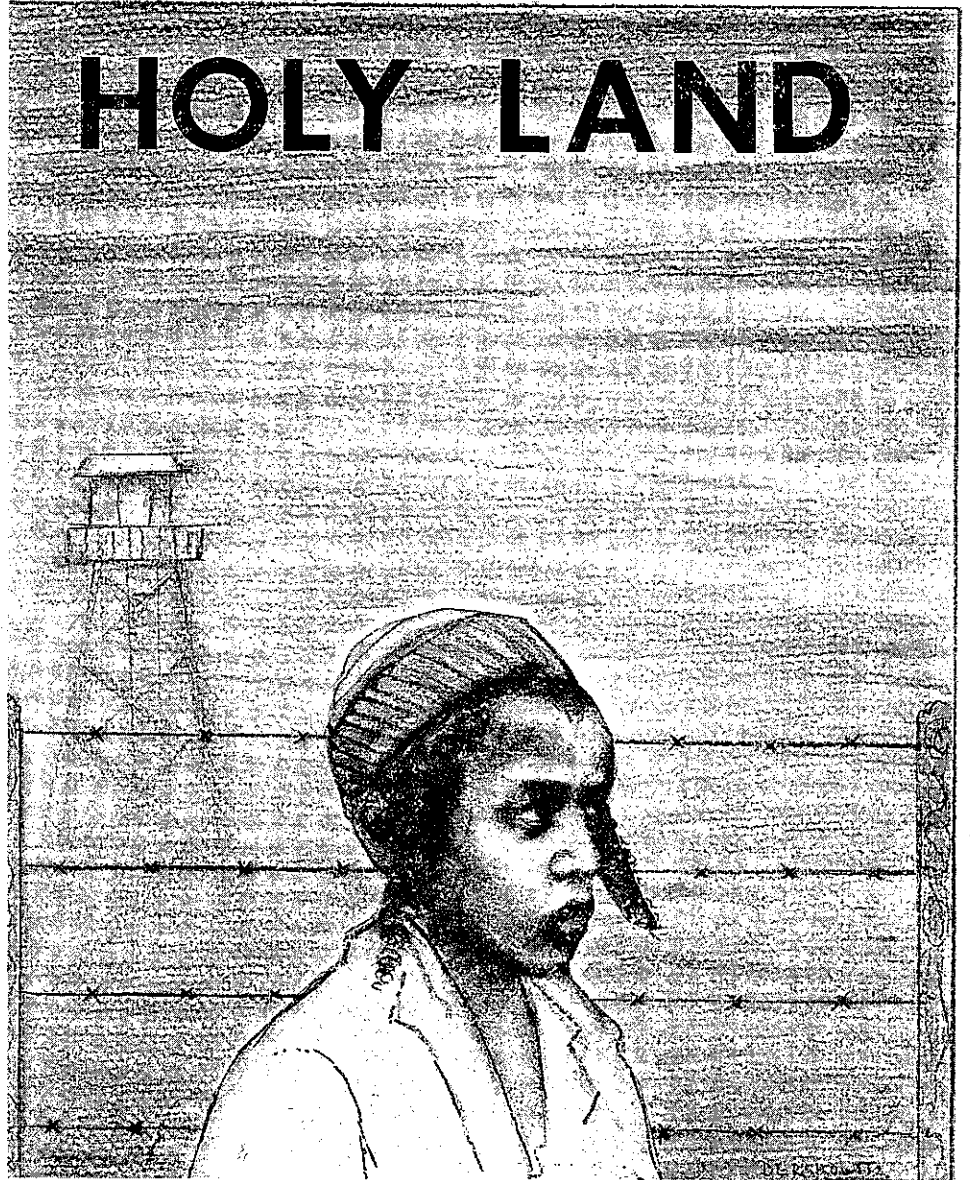


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in the

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GENOCIDE

IN THE HOLY LANI

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by

Rabbi Moshe Schonfeld ז"ל

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דברים כג. ט. רש"י (פסרי מדרש רבה ותחומא פנחס)

"He who leads one to sin is worse than he who kills him."

Medrash Rabbah Bamidbar , Pinchas

What the murderers did not achieve in Poland, our destroyers
from within wish to complete here in the Holy Land.

--David Rubinstein

A brother -in-law of two Teheran boys in a letter

לזכר עולם

IN MEMORIAM

Dedicated To

ע"ה רבי משה שחנפלד
Rabbi Moshe Schonfeld

נפטר ה' אלול תשל"ה
תנצ"ה

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INTRODUCTION

The Jewish people have been enjoined in Deuteronomy (23:3-6) not to accept the Ammonites or the Moabites into their congregation for they tried to entice the Jews to sin. The effect of sin is so profound on the sinner, (in the case of Ammon and Moab) that it continues even beyond his tenth generation. The stigma can never be removed, not only from the sinner, but from all of his progeny. As Rashi explains in his commentary of the above verse the difference between the sinners and those who would have wanted to annihilate the Jewish people physically: ancient Egypt and Edom--that the ancient Egyptians and Edomites can be accepted into the assemblage of G-d after the third generation, while the Ammonites and the Moabites cannot, because causing someone to sin, is much worse than he who kills someone. Thus, Zionists who not only have broken the mitzvos, but also have enticed countless thousands of Jewish immigrants to the state of Israel to sin by turning them into atheists are much worse according to the Torah than murderers. Their goal has been to transform the Jewish people from a religious people to a secular nation. They have used various methods in different countries, depending on the circumstances. They have used the guise of religion when it was to their advantage, confusing Zionism and Judaism in the minds of those from whom they hope to gain support. They have even used the holocaust to play upon the sympathies of the unwitting to get what they want. They have used the horrible suffering of millions of Jews to enable them to build a nation, as all other nations.

The Zionists have attempted to strike at the heart of Judaism in an effort to gain control over the Jewish people. They have used any and all means to secure that goal, including bribery, terrorism, anti-semitism and the violation of the basic human right of religious freedom. The Zionist dream of the establishment of the State of Israel was based on manipulation of the anti-semitism of Western leaders by Theodore Herzl, the

architect of modern-day Zionism. It was furthered by bribery which was used, for example, to persuade the imam of Yemen and Southern Arabian sultans to allow the Yemeni Jews to immigrate to Israel. Terrorism has also been a capstone of Zionism. One need only remember the tactics of the Irgun in the 1940's, of which Israel's current Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, was a member. Countless terrorist acts, such as those used in 1950-1951 in Baghdad, Iraq, have been attributed to the Zionists--terrorist acts not only against those opposed to the Zionists, but also against their fellow Jews to persuade them to immigrate to Israel.

All of these tactics, which most people would agree are despicable, were used. But -- the worst -- is the Zionist's denial of the freedom of religious education and religious expression to their fellow Jews. This method reached alarming proportions with the attempt of wholesale brainwashing of orphaned Polish Orthodox children on their way to Palestine via Teheran in 1942-1943. Various methods were used by the Zionists to "convert" the children from their Orthodoxy to the secular nationalist "faith" of the Zionists. It began with subtle brainwashing of weak, terrified children and continued with overt acts, such as the denial of religious articles and instruction, food and clothing. When these tactics did not work, violence was used in some cases, with some children being beaten and boys being put into solitary confinement for leading children in prayer. This book describes all the above in great detail.

These methods, which were fairly successful on most of the children, were again used in the 1950's against the Orthodox Jews of Yemen who were taken to the Zionist State in what was dubbed Operation Magic Carpet. This large-scale immigration designed by the Zionists increased the population of the Zionist State by nearly 100,000. Once they were in the Promised Land, the naive Yemenites, who had come from a completely different, Asiatic, non-technological culture, were taken advantage of by

the Zionists. They, too, like the Teheran children before them, were denied the basic right of religious freedom. They were not allowed to have synagogues, and their children were not allowed religious education. They were coerced with threats--denying them food, housing and the right to work. Now for the first time the English reading public has a chance to read about this.

Moroccan Jews faced a similar fate at the hands of the Zionists. They, too, were threatened with the denial of life's basic necessities if they persisted in their demands for religious education for their children and for synagogues for their communities.

Illustrations of these outrageous Zionist methods abound. They pervade the annals of the history of the Zionist State, dating many years prior to its establishment, and continuing up to the present. This presentation is but a fraction of the atrocities committed.

But why, one might ask, should we be upset if the Jews involved were not physically harmed, if they simply "persuaded" them to give up their Orthodox beliefs and the daily expression of their faith? None of the Teheran children was physically killed. They were simply placed, for the most part, in secular institutions where they were trained to be "good" citizens of the state.. Orthodox Judaism's answer to this is that they were murdered -- a spiritual murder. And spiritual death is much worse than physical death because that soul is lost to Judaism forever. This was and is genocide.

How did this happen? When the corruption of the Teheran children began, it was not widely recognized. Only after friends, relatives and some Orthodox rabbis visited the transit camps holding the children did word begin to leak out. But who could believe that Jews would try to tear other Jews away from their faith? However when some members of Agudath Israel saw with their own eyes what was happening, they began to protest the treatment of the children at the hands of the Zionists. Agudath

Israel was established originally in Poland to fight Zionism. But some of their leaders became corrupted when they saw the money and power they could gain by taking some children into their schools and receiving maintenance funds from the Zionists. What began with good intentions -- to save the religious children from secularism -- became a mockery, with both Agudath Israel and the Mizrahi double dealing for the children's souls. While the Mizrahi was dealing with the Zionists from the start of the discussions concerning the children's placement, the Agudah initially sought to save all the children from the horrible fate.

Unfortunately, one of the leaders of the Agudah, Isaac Meir Lewin, succumbed to the lure of money and power and began to negotiate with the Zionists how to divide the children among the groups wanting them...and the maintenance funds. His collaboration with the Zionists was eventually rewarded with the position of Minister of Welfare in the very soon to be established new state.

Some men protested this change of goals. The National Convention of Agudath Youth, which took place during the Intermediary Days of Passover in 1944, issued a strong declaration against the Zionists and implored the Agudath Israel leaders to cease negotiations with the Zionists:

Declaration

The crime the Jewish Agency perpetrated against the suffering Teheran children is enough to stir every heart, even in these dire days full of grief. The large majority of these children, which the Jewish Agency itself confirmed were of Orthodox parents, were spiritually annihilated. With deception and through coercion, the Jewish Agency tore away these children from their faith. From a total of seven hundred and fifty children, only thirty were permitted a religious education in yeshivos.

What has happened to these Teheran children might just as

well be the consequences, G-d forbid, of 30,000 more children, yet to come to these shores. Religious youth! **We Dare Not Remain Silent!** These children are our brothers and friends. Just as ourselves, they were born to religious parents; just as ourselves, they were reared in the path of the Torah. Behold what has befallen them today! The parents were killed by the Nazis, and under the hands of the Zionists the souls of these orphans are being killed. The Nazis severed the parents from their children in this world and the Zionists want to separate them in this world and the world to come. It is without any doubt that the parents would rather have the death of their children than for them to have a life void of Torah and fear of the Al-mighty.

To the leaders of the Agudath Israel and especially to the leaders of the Poalei Agudath Israel, we say: Rend yourselves from this evil assemblage. Sever all bonds with them. Desist from all negotiations with them. Deny any gains to be obtained from them. Carefully guard the autonomy of the Orthodox Jewry who fear the L-rd. Put an end to all illusion. The Zionists are the most dangerous enemies of the Jewish people. With them no compromises are possible. Orthodox Jewry must fight them until they are destroyed.

Teachers of our youth! Unmask before your students the evil of the Zionists! Place in their hearts the clear understanding that our struggle against Zionism and all its offshoots is a continuation of the historical battle of the Prophet Eijah and the false prophets of the Ba'al, the battles of the Macabees and the Hellenists, the battles of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The complete text of the declaration can be seen in chapter eight.

Rabbi Moshe Schonfeld, of blessed memory, also continually protested Agudath Israel's participation in the Zionist deals and wrote the book **The Teheran Children Accuse** in 1944 to reveal what the Zionists and Mizrahi were doing.

INTRODUCTION

But he still hoped that the Agudah's leadership would return to their original sacred mission, to save all the children, so he did not explicitly accuse his fellow Agudath Israel leaders of dealing for the children's souls. He tried for over twenty years to return the Agudah to their original path, to fight against Zionism, but realizing that he spoke to deaf ears, he broke away from Agudath Israel in the 1960's when they again after thirty years of wheeling and dealing with the Zionists for the funds instead of souls, sold Moroccan Jewry to the Zionist devil, as will be shown in the last chapter of this book.

The outline for the development of the Teheran children scandal and the consequences for all Jews who immigrate to the Holy Land thereafter are revealed by Rabbi Schonfeld in an article, "Do Not Forget".

In 1943, on the Friday before the Torah reading commanding Jews to remember what Amalek did to us, **HaDerech**, the organ of the Agudath Israel in Tel Aviv, ran a front-page banner headline which read, "Remember what the Jewish Agency did to Jewish Children on their way out of exile into the Holy Land. Do not Forget."

At the time, Torah Jewry, headed by the Rav of Brisk (Rabbi Yitzchok Z'ev Soloveitchik), was waging a major battle on behalf of the Teheran children. If that tragic affair would have been consigned to the past, we might have been permitted to ignore or forget that unfortunate date in the spirit of, "Do not recall unto us our earlier transgressions."

But to our dismay that was only the first sin, the prelude to a program of spiritual annihilation of Jewish children which is still spreading in every dimension. What happened 35 years ago to a thousand children applies today to tens of thousands who have

been sacrificed on the altar of the secular Zionist idol.

The Soul Hunters

The soul-hunters of the Youth Aliyah have operated consistently and persistently. Their energies have not flagged and their aim, saturated with hatred of the Torah, is to remove every single Jewish child from the tradition of its ancestors: Their hatred still burns within them with the same fervor as in the past.

Only among Torah loyal Jews has a tragic change taken place. The plight of endangered children years ago stirred up our very beings, aroused our best inclinations, and prodded us to make every effort, today leaves us apathetic, quiet, self-controlled and helpless. Consequently, it is not my purpose now to protest and to express wonder about those who cause us anguish, but rather about ourselves, who have grown slothful in the work of rescue. Day in, day out, hour after hour, we violate the Torah's serious warning, "Do not stand by while your fellowman's life is at stake."

The Accomplices

A public group, other than Youth Aliyah, has remained consistent in its attitudes and in its assistance as an accomplice to these crimes, serving as a handle to the ax raised to cut off tender shoots in G-d's Vineyard.

This is the National Religious Party known as Mizrahi. They are the ones who stopped the efforts at rescue in the case of the Teheran children; they are the ones who split the front of loyal Jewry by providing sleeping pills; and they continue today to be a stumbling-block to Torah Jewry and to provide shield and armor for rampant secularism.

In the case of the Teheran children, the Mizrahi

made a shameful agreement with Youth Aliyah about how to do business with Jewish souls, dividing them on a percentage basis. To this very day, it maintains the same system of giving away five Jewish souls for every one it receives. There is no doubt that if the Mizrachi had not led the public astray at the time of the affair of the Teheran children, that if it had not provided false information to Jewry abroad and here, then the boycott declared against the United Jewish Appeal and Jewish National Fund which seriously affected the Jewish Agency would have compelled Youth Aliyah to agree to the principle that at least every child from a religious home should be absorbed in a Torah institution.

The Traitorous Rabbi Fishman (Maimon)

The fury against the forcible removal of the Teheran children from their faith was so great that even secular leaders such as the Marchioness of Reading, Betel Locker and Zelig Brodetsky rained telegrams upon the Jewish Agency demanding that the Teheran children be given a religious education. The Jewish Agency was clever enough to choose Rabbi Y.L. Fishman (Maimon) to fight its battle against all the protestors. He carried out this traitorous task with loyalty and succeeded in convincing Stephen Wise, the extremist Reform Rabbi, that no harm would come to the souls of the Teheran children. That moment should be set aside as a permanent anniversary for mourning. Not only did Rabbi Fishman then seal the spiritual fate of the Teheran children, but he sealed the future of tens of thousands of children who were brought from all parts of the world to be educated no differently than if they had been captured by pagans.

Rabbi Hager's Story

It seems to me that the time has now come to reveal the dimension of that affair a dimension still unknown to the public so that people may know how bad things really were. When the Teheran Children-Accuse was published, I received a letter from Rabbi Menachem Hager, o.b.m. Until recently Chairman of the Chevra Kaddisha in Tel Aviv, he had been a rabbi in Sosnowiec, Poland, and a long-time Mizrachi leader.

Rabbi Hager met with me and told me his story. In Teheran, he had met the refugees who arrived via Russia and had spent time in Teheran together with the Polish children. He had seen at first hand what the Jewish Agency madrichim did to the unfortunate orphans and also to adult refugees.

Before his very eyes, his world was totally destroyed. He saw the dream for which he had sacrificed his best years and energies devoid of delusion. He realized that the representatives of the Zionist Federation and its educators were in no way different from Russian Jewish violators of the faith, the evil Yevsektzia, which he had encountered in Russia. He saw these people in all their immorality, he saw their wickedness, their viper-like cruelty; he saw them lacking all the character traits that distinguish the Jewish people.

And he was especially shaken by a question posed him by a minister of another faith in Teheran. The minister told him, "The Church institutions in London have instructed us not to carry on missionary activities among the Jewish refugees in Teheran in view of the terrible destruction of Jewry in Poland. We are to offer material assistance but not to attempt any kind of

spiritual influencing. Now your **madrichim** are forcibly uprooting from the hearts of these children every bit of religious feeling, and they are implanting atheism instead!" Rabbi Hager could not answer. He had no idea what to answer. He had only one hope: that upon arrival in Palestine he would raise a storm. He was confident that the **Yishuv** was unaware of what was happening and, most of all, he relied on his friends in the Miz rachi organization to react vigorously and to demand that the responsible parties be brought to justice and that arrangements be made to heal the children of the spiritual wounds they had suffered.

The news about what the **madrichim** were doing in Teheran spread throughout the world. And it compelled the Jewish Agency to establish an investigative commission whose members were Rabbi Fishman, Greenbaum, Dr. Sentor, A. Dobkin and Moshe Shapiro -- all members of the Jewish Agency Executive.

In an editorial headed **Scoffing, Ha'Aretz** commented, "It is difficult to believe what one's eyes read. An investigative commission composed entirely of Jewish Agency people! In other words, the institution responsible for what happened is going to investigate itself!"

True Horrors of Zionism

Rabbi Hager presented his complaint before this commission. He accused the directors of the refugee camp, especially Menachem Rudnitzky, may his memory be a curse forever, of three major categories of crimes: theft, sexual immorality and murder. The commission eventually disbanded without reaching

any conclusions, offering the excuse that it would present all the information it received to a special court of the Zionist Congress (which, naturally, was never convened). The investigative commission did all that it could to cover up all the sins that were committed. The secretary even distorted all the testimony in the minutes. The heads of the Jewish Agency brought pressure to bear upon the witnesses for the prosecution not to appear, or they tried to get them to change their testimony from negative to positive. Rabbi Hager walked out and said, "I give up." He tore the hair from his head in great anguish and shock, and finally decided that he must do something to publicize all the material he had, including the protocol of the testimony given before the investigative commission and the accusations that he had presented in private. Over many weeks we worked together editing the material, and when it was completed, I saw that the material I had prepared for **The Teheran Children Accuse** was the weakest reflection of the horrors of Teheran, that the factual situation had been a hundred times worse than presented in my book, even though the book created great shock waves.

Mizrachi Breaks Rabbi Hager

At the last moment before publishing his work, I was asked by Rabbi Hager to withhold all the material we had gathered and edited. Rabbi Hager broke down and wept and said that he could no longer stand up to the horrible pressures being applied to him by his friends in the Mizrachi. He was far too broken and shattered a man to go out alone and wage open war against the heads of the **Yishuv** and the Zionist Histadrut. This was the shocking tragedy of a

wonderful and noble man whom brutality, terror and blackmail silenced. I am confident that I am causing great pleasure to his soul by relating his hopeless battle and by removing some of the mystery that surrounds the affair of the Teheran Children.

It is not feasible to publicize in a religious publication the material presented before the investigative committee. For the most part, these are actions of sexual immorality which no sensitive mind can bear.

The Jewish consciences of the Jewish Agency Executive, including Mizrahi men Moshe Shapiro and Rabbi Yehuda Leib Fishman (Maimon), did not obligate them to reprove Menachem Rudnitzky even mildly. He suffered only one unpleasant incident when a number of Teheran children met him in the street and wished to mete out their own justice to him. Rudnitzky and his colleagues performed this major task -- the uprooting of Jewish faith -- in the name of the Jewish Agency. They were the Jewish Agency in Teheran. Of 750 Teheran children, almost all of whom (with the exception of seventeen) had been educated in Chadarim or in Beth Jacob schools, exactly thirty two of them were sent to Torah institutions! That was the end of the affair.

The Climax But Not the End

Ever since then, religious Jewry has suffered new problems which have caused it to forget the old problems. Every wave of new immigration was brought and drowned in the foam of secularism. One by one, these groups were lost to the Jewish people.

Who is the polltaker who can count every new

edition of the affair of the Teheran children? Who can weigh the suffering? Who can collect the tears of the oppressed? Of the parents who bewailed their children, pure Jewish children, whom sin came to destroy? Who, though raised in the diaspora to be as Jewish as possible, came to the Holy Land to shepherd "polar bears" -- kibbutz slang for pigs.

What We Can Do

The question then is asked: Why should we be compelled to remember and not to forget? Why should we flagellate ourselves when all we do is raise up layers of bitterness and frustration? What can we do to correct the past?

In the study hall of Jewry, we have learned that we must commemorate destruction. Also, that we may not forget wicked deeds and wicked people. "Do not forget" means an inner protest, an unwillingness to compromise with wickedness even when it is successful. "Remember" serves as a shield that protects us from disillusionment by providing us awareness of the nature of our enemy. It serves as leverage to lift one up to a position of sober self-protection, and it is a guarantee that there will be no inner peace, that there will be constant and fruitful fermentation within the individual. The affair of the Teheran children, which has turned into a concept, is not a lesson of and for itself alone, but comes to teach us about the collective tragedy of all the Jewish children swallowed up by secular oppression in the Holy Land. It is the realization of the curse in Deutoronony 28: "Your sons and your daughters are given to another nation" which Targum Yonasan renders "To a secular nation!"

Do not forget! And do not be silent, for silence denotes acceptance of the situation. When the Pharaoh of ancient Egypt wanted to destroy the Jewish people, he asked the advice of Bilaam, Jethro and Job (Talmud Tractate Sanhedrin 106). Bilaam said to annihilate the Jews; Jethro ran away; and Job gave no advice, but kept quiet. Job's punishment for his silence was years of suffering--the loss of his children and his land, and the pain of physical ailments--which he had to endure. Because of his apparent acceptance of the Pharaoh's desire to destroy the Jews, as evidenced by his silence, G-d made him suffer so that he would no longer be silent but would cry out. Only if something hurts do we scream. And we should be screaming because of the spiritual genocide of the Teheran children, and the Yemenites, and the Moroccans and the Iraqis and all the Jews whom the Zionists have torn away from Judaism.

This crime of spiritual genocide perpetrated on the Jews by the Zionists and their collaborators has no parallel in Jewish history. It can rightfully only compare with the gravest of sins -- that of the establishment of the Zionist state -- which has usurped the holy name of Israel. These two crimes, are the greatest tragedies to befall the Jews ever. Greater than the destruction of the Holy Temple -- which was committed by Gentiles -- while this catastrophe was done by Jews. And much worse than Hitler's annihilation of over six million Jews -- as they lost only this world -- while the children and youth the Zionists annihilated spiritually have lost both worlds.

We have included information on the Teheran children, the Yemenites, the Iraqis, the Algerians, the Moroccans, the Djerbans and the Persians, but this in no way tells the whole story of what the Zionists have done to religious Jews. For every group discussed, there are countless others. The Zionists' anti-religious coercion began long before the establishment of the state of Israel, and

IT CONTINUES TODAY!

To all the leading rabbis of renown and to all communal leaders throughout the diaspora: G-d be with you!

A PUBLIC PROTEST AND OUTCRY!

The stone in the wall cries out and all faces are blackened because of the deliberate cruelty perpetrated by those who speak in the name of the people and have abused their power by oppressing thousands of children -- refugees from the sword and the flame, unfortunate orphans whose parents died or were murdered, thus leaving them untended in Siberia -- who were handed to them in Teheran to be brought to the Holy Land.

A new period then began in the lives of these unfortunate orphans -- suffering upon suffering, tragedy upon tragedy. Like the man who runs away from the lion to be met by the bear, they escaped physical destruction only to meet up with a campaign of spiritual destruction. The fury of these "guardians" poured down, forcibly removing them from their faith and the practice of Judaism as they were taught by their parents and grandparents. Almost every one of these children was born of devout parents and was raised in an atmosphere of unparalleled sanctity. Many are children and grandchildren of rabbis and **chassidic** rebbes, brilliant scholars and righteous holy men from all over Galicia and Poland. Whoever sees these children recognizes them as G-d blessed seed.

As soon as these children were placed in the hands of their oppressors in Persia, the latter immediately provided teachers and counselors who demanded that they leave their entire past behind and accustom themselves to live new lives devoid of the Torah and its laws. They utilized all means to obliterate the memory of their fathers and mothers and to uproot from their minds any trace of faith. It is particularly shocking that they absolutely refused to let them recite kaddish on behalf of their fathers and mothers who had so recently died in such a tragic and cruel manner.

They immediately began to habituate them to non kosher food and to the desecration of Sabbath, Yom Kipur, and the rest of the Jewish holy days. They scoffed at all that is sacred. When many of the children withstood their efforts at the cost of much self-sacrifice, and in memory of their parents who had died sanctifying G-d, the "guardians" actually went to war against the children, a war in the fullest sense of the word, using every means of compulsion. **It makes one's hair stand on end to hear that anyone would be so cruel to small unfortunate children as in the Spanish Inquisition.**

Yet all this did not help sway the children from their faith. What these little children suffered at the hands of their evil counselors was incredible. Yet most of these holy children withstood their suffering and arrived here in our land pure and whole, expressing hope that here in the Holy Land, they would find a clear way to live a life of Torah and Jewish-observance in accord with the express wish of their late parents who, until the last moments of life hoped and prayed that their children might keep to G-d's way as they had taught them.

But to our sorrow and that of all who fear G-d, this hope of the children and of their parents was dashed. One's heart breaks to see the sacred fires of self-sacrifice for G-d's sake that had burned so furiously in the hearts of the children, slowly being extinguished here, in our land. For their "guardians" settled them in irreligious transit camps overflowing with the poison of atheism. Forcibly, they are exerting tremendous influence on the children's entire way of life to reject the life of Torah and Jewish observance they had desired and hoped for and to choose a life of license as practiced in those camps. The wicked are on constant alert not to permit any religious influence to reach the children from devout Jewry. The situation of the children is tragic and upsetting because they are tossing about in the last throes of self-sacrifice on the very threshold of spiritual death - G-d preserve them and us. The entire devout Yishuv is looking on as 1,000 children of martyrs are being lost and is powerless to save them.

While these children were still in Teheran, we received

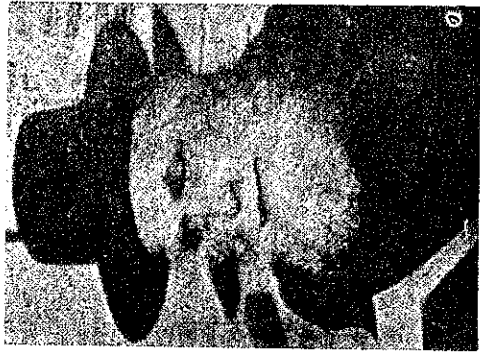


Rabbi Abraham Mordecai Alter, the Gerer Rebbe. Even a gift from the Zionists is destructive (from his letters).

reports here of only a fraction of what went on there. We have seen with our own eyes what became of the children who arrived here earlier from Germany and other countries and were educated by these very same "guardians". The situation is very tragic because they are totally lost to the Jewish people. They no longer have any link with the faith and the Torah (additionally they are morally corrupt in every single way, in a most disgusting manner, impossible to put into writing). Therefore we immediately turned to the committee making arrangements for these children and declared that we, too, would like to receive children and to educate them in the spirit of Torah, in view of the fact that these arriving children were for the most part from religious homes. But they did not respond to our request at all because they are the rulers, and who can tell them what to do? After much effort, we finally got them to begin negotiating with us. But this was only superficial. Functionally, it was totally irrelevant because they simply put us off time and time again with all kinds of excuses. Meanwhile, they held the children in those dangerous camps from which no Jewish soul ever escaped unscathed, utilizing every means at their disposal, including compulsion, not to leave any trace of the Torah and everything these children had learned and been trained for in their parents' homes. To this very day, they are still working over the children in order to remove them from their faith, to uproot from their hearts every last vestige of faith that is still within them - just as they began in Teheran. Our hearts are wounded and pained because so many have already fallen victim to their efforts. There are still many who are fighting for their existence. They continue to rebel at all that their eyes perceive in the area of religious destruction in those camps, and they secretly requested that we save them from those irreligious educators who at present have them under their control. But how long will these little heroes be able to stand up to their powerful brutal task masters, who will not consider anything except their single-minded goal of turning them into people without the slightest trace of Torah or faith, which is the reason they brought the children here. These children of martyrs, who come from

famous and glorious Jewish families, were gathered as unclaimed baggage by these anti-religious people in order to use them to attain their goal. The earth trembles at this; and every person must be shaken at hearing of this cruel theft, this robbery of the living and the dead; of bereft families that were taken away before their time, whose suffering was one long chain of wandering and anguish. Now, these people come and deprive them of their last hope, by destroying their children through permanent **sh'mad**.

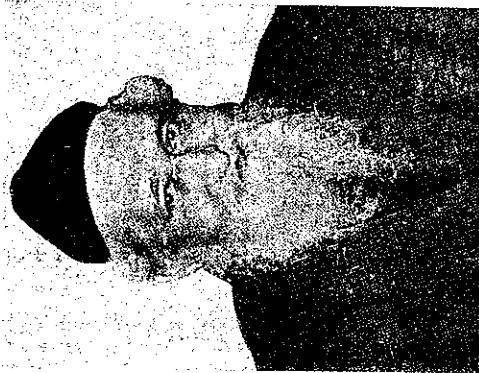
The entire Yishuv is in shock over the affair of these Teheran children. **The horrible inquisition to which they are being subjected has no peer in Jewish history, an inquisition to converted away from Judaism little children, an inquisition operated by people who call themselves Jews!** It has called forth the protest of the entire Yishuv in our Holy Land. How could this evil have come to pass? The mourning and the wailing in our land has become a general trend ever since the children have arrived. It began when the children related what had happened in Teheran to those people who had visited them there, and continued when they narrated what had happened to them on the trip from Teheran to Palestine. Shocking deeds which make it impossible for the eye to remain tearless, for the heart not to melt. The storm and wailing grew greater after we all saw what kind of children they were. It is not only the majority of them, but rather almost every single one comes from the best of Orthodox Jewry in Galicia and Poland. Children who were raised to pure Judaism, who were provided the basics of Torah and fear of G-d, without any compromises, and - woe! what has happened to them, what is being done to them in Palestine! Every effort is being put forth so that not a single one of these children will remain religious. The entire community of the Holy Land is witness to the deeds and the behavior of the "guardians" of these children who are not permitting a single religious spark to reach them. They hold them tightly, so that only they and their guides will govern the children physically and spiritually, through every single means of compulsion and seduction. About this, the entire Yishuv is



Rabbi Akiva Sofer
"Rav of Pressburg"



Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer



Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik,
the 'Brisker Rov'.

up in arms. Many protest meetings have been held, some of which you have read about in the newspapers. Moreover, the entire community, man and women of all circles, protest publicly and mourn bitterly that at this moment when fury and anger have struck the Jewish people abroad; when the sword has demolished the best of our people - **that at this time there should be taking place within our Holy Land a spiritual annihilation run by Jews themselves against survivors who have escaped from Europe. Woe, what has befallen us!**

We have done all that we could. We have protested; we have screamed; we have waited; we implored these people time and again to desist from the steps they are taking. But to our sorrow, all our yelling and all our activity have been in vain. After all this screaming, after all the protests, the opinion of the children's "guardians" has not been altered in the least. Therefore, we find it necessary to raise our voice of protest to all our brethren in the diaspora, in every single land: Rabbis, communal leaders - whoever has the power to do anything in this matter - we beg of you, from the depths of our angered and torn hearts: Do not be silent! Do not stand by quietly! Do whatever you can in this matter! It is our obligation to save the remnants of Jewry: these poor children, who have not yet been destroyed. It is obligatory upon you to let your voices be heard in protest, loudly, from all over the diaspora against this **sh'mad** taking place, of compelling unfortunate religious children to leave their faith and the faith of their parents. Demand most forcefully that these children be immediately handed over to loyal hands which will give them the Orthodox education that their parents willed, so that they can continue in the manner they were trained and educated for, and not the type of education called "religious" given here by certain political groups, in which light and darkness are intermingled - a bit of sacred study mixed in among much heresy. For there is no doubt that these people will seek to show themselves clean-handed in the eyes of the world by placing a number of children into hands that will provide them with such a type of education. But that is merely pulling the wool over the public's

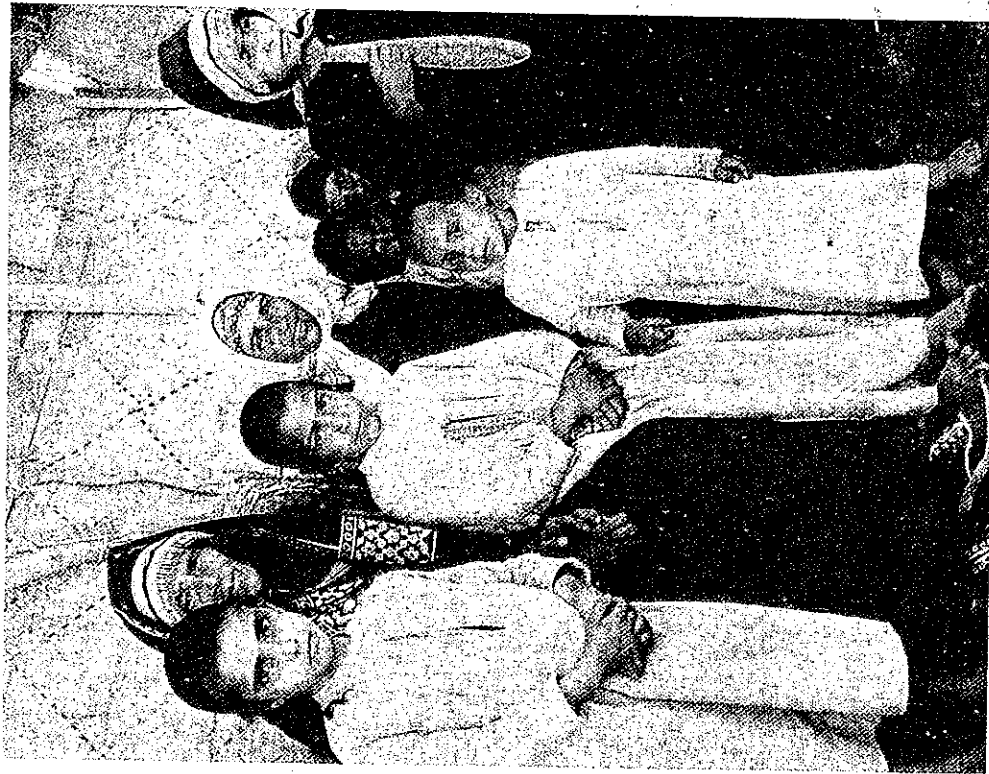
eyes. We, here, see the results of this education. All who have been trained by them are foreign to the spirit of Torah and the spirit of Judaism. The best of them do not have any Torah or pure faith. Therefore, we must demand vigorously, that these children be given the same pure education - in the ancient Jewish spirit - that everyone of them had received in his parental home. Only then will we have fulfilled our obligation and not be sinning against these children, the orphans of martyrs butchered by the Germans.

Realize that this is not a question of 1,000 children who have already arrived. They are preparing to bring another 30,000 children from Siberia and other lands. Let us not be misled. Let the entire Jewish public understand its obligation in this matter. Do everything in your power so that Jewish children will not be treated like the spoils of war to remain under the control of whoever happens to grab them and to be removed from our Holy Torah and from the traditions of our forefathers. Surely you, the rabbis of Jewry and the heads of Jewish communities, will utilize every means possible to put an end to these crimes by protests and by pressure on all the institutions that participate in supporting these children to make sure that your influence is felt. Fortunate are those who will have the merit of saving these children.

Signed, with broken heart and bitter spirit,

**Avrohom Mordechai Alter (Rebbe of Ger)
Akiva Sofer (Rabbi of Presburg)**

**Iser Zalmen Meltzer (Dean of Yeshiva Etz Chaim)
Yitzchok Zev Soloveichik (Rabbi of Brisk)**



This is the way the Yemenite Jews looked and lived in Yemen before they were brought to the "Promised Land". On your next trip to the "Promised Land" see if you can find any traces of this way of life. Travelers to Israel maintain that they cannot find any traces of it.

קִינֵי תִימְנִית

גלות תימן מימינו כהן על דרך מבטם כענין הדת כשעברו תימן ועלו לארץ והסביר החייל המלכות פברות דברים של התנזרות בין תימן וציון כפי שלא ידעוה מברבו שגאונה על עיופת תימן ויהיה במצבא דבר על הארץ היו דבר האנהה ושכחו חלב על השמן נטמם התנהגות הישנה שחיה להם בתימן האברה קליהם כמסתמם לארץ ודבר הקרנות מפרה על כל המבוא.

זו אנה ואלה נעקו ער שחוקים קול נחי וקניה מואץ מרחקים דברי קשות גוראות על כל לבב דוסקים ארץ תימן וציון שואנים ונאקים מי יעלה דינו במאומם צודקים זמ יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים.

מי יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים

אברה תימן אוי לו על כמה דברי בשנת המשות שנים שבע מאות ועשר בשארתי להרסה לא הרר לו ולא תואר יום נטקו לארבה שולמית אגן הסוהר על ציון ארץ הקודש אני קריא הנבי מרוע להפאשתי דין על חוקים.

מי יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים

אחרת סמוכה

ענתה קולת שרירים כשבוין לב אנביה מרוע בארץ תימן הלכנו בדרך מובה שמרתי תורה ומצות נער חזק ושיבה עתה בארץ קדשנו החולתנו נמובה עקבנו אודות דובר וכל מדה חשבה השבנו ר' אהרן נשכוח.

השבנו ר' אהרן נשכוח

מרוע בארץ תימן היינו דבר גרוזים שלוש הפלות ככל יום בלבנות עלינו ועתים קבועים לתורה ערב ובוך חרובים עתה בארץ הלולה דבר ה' בויבם לא תורה ולא הפלה זא ארץ קשובה.

השבנו ר' אהרן נשכוח

מרוע בארץ תימן היינו ממוינים כמנות צרות רבע פאות ככל היום משונים ומלכש נהרד מורה לרוע קורש אנביה אתה בארץ קדשנו הורשת זו הנפם הלבשה נבירה משקפת ותעבה.

השבנו ר' אהרן נשכוח

מרוע בארץ תימן שפרנו שבת כולכה ודמי היום ומעטים כרת חוקה נכובה עתה בארץ

קול אנהה ואלה נעקו ער שחוקים קול נחי וקניה מואץ מרחקים דברי קשות גוראות על כל לבב דוסקים ארץ תימן וציון שואנים ונאקים מי יעלה דינו במאומם צודקים זמ יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים.

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מי יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים

אברה תימן זאת חסאך זה פריה על השטוף את בני ככל מלך וקרלה מום גלותם לא יבדך לא מצאו הגיהר הסה גיום בתחיות אחם מי עלייה דברי אותם לשמים ולהמה ויהי ומרוד דור כעמך כמר לבם צעקים.

מי יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים

אברה תימן אל תקשו עלי אמרים כי הסה כמסנע גלו לקבל דינים המורים וקו אנהו שלוחים בגיות וצר מאורים וכל זאת לא עשינו כלה והרסם גוררים זמ ננע כם תוקה אחת דתי להחרים נפיהם חי למטלה במשפטים וחוקים.

מי יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים

אברה תימן אלפי שנים המאת ומני עשורים אתך ועני כלות לזאת מתי יקרב חבא זמן קר המילאות יקובצו ויבואו המורים ככל פירות גלילה ונשמה כאל אלהי הגמאות לקיים דת נאמנה עלי לזכות חוקים.

מי יריב רבנות מי ידון דין עשוקים

אברה תימן כואי נשפחה יחי אייך ואפוא שמתוך זאיה שלום מפרה ביום היותם ארץ

the Yemenite Lamentations.

THE TEHERAN CHILDREN ACCUSE FOREWORD

This book has not been written to stir up ill-will or spread the fire of divisiveness among Jews. More than a written accusation, it is a cry of shock, an expression of deep and penetrating pain, a final warning. This is not a collection of polemical argumentations, but a collection of documents and the testimony of trustworthy people — the results of long and rigorous investigation. We have avoided exaggeration and imaginative fervor. We have eliminated dubious statements and have included only those facts whose truth has been established. These facts speak for themselves in a language so clear and so sharp that we have been able to forego, in almost all instances, any editorial commentary.

The daily press in Palestine, for the most part, ignored all the information and all the press releases that the institutions of Agudath Israel provided, and so proved itself to be a mere party tool. Orthodoxy does not yet have a daily newspaper, so we are compelled to reach the Jewish public with this volume in order to rouse and shock it. We believe that within the soul of every Jewish person, even one who does not include himself among the Torah observers, there is hidden a spark of Jewishness; and it is that smoldering spark that we seek to set aflame, the conscience of every honest man that we wish to arouse. We present this concentrated material for the criticism of the public.

Study it carefully and come to your own conclusions with unprejudiced integrity. Just as the words were written in pain and anguish, so will they stir the reader's heart to pain and anguish, to a sense of shame and disgrace at all that Jews can do

קדשנו עשויים בהם כל מלאכה. אורה לי על שבר
נורא מולי תצמח לי אורכה. יאצקת היתה כזאת
באום בת נדיב אהובה.

מנוע בארץ תימן הנטו כנות ישראל צנועות. בליל
הפארת לכוין מוזמנת ודיועה. עתה בארץ
קדשנו מהגלות פרועות. ורחוק עם אנשים
שלושי יד הרעות. אוי בי נפל כבודי והדון ממעל
עד היום רבה.

מנוע בארץ תימן משפט ברוך לאור יצא.
ושופטין בין יריבים בון גבורה ועזה. עתה
בארץ קדשנו רחוק רחוק מי יצא. דלים למשפט
צועקים זאלמה לחוצה. ישנו ואין משיע כעת
צרה קרובה.

מנוע בארץ תימן המים זמורים כקולות.
ארוי עם לעשריהם מאר גילה יקרתם. עתה
בארץ קדשנו חיי צער היותם. גלה כבוד מהממים
כאין מבור לחמבתם. ואין הוון לעשרים
למשותם העולות.

מנוע בארץ תימן היינו יחד המסים. ועובדים
לא אחר ובשם יהודים תומכים. עתה בארץ
קדשנו כמולות רבות רשומים. חמת דתנו מרודה
מאין תחומים. אוי מי יחבוש לכווינג מן ירשא
זאת המשונה.

מי ירח ראשי מים זעוני כמור דמעות. ואצבה
יומם גילית להגיעם ושעות. על חסון תפארת
דתי ועל כמת מרעות. אלא עד מוסר שלישי
כקלי דמי הדעות. עד יבנה האל מקדש שלישי
ובני קדם אשוכה.

עז נבנה

אחרת סמכה

אש חוקי בקרבי
כחולתי בתמינה
נפשי תהומה
כבואי ציונה
יהודים לפניה
כחולתי בתמינה

שולמות מכל סיג
כבואי ציונה

לא נורא ואיום
כחולתי בתמינה

להמלאכתם שומדים
כבואי ציונה

מרי יום ג' ה'
כחולתי בתמינה

רק תורת הנח
כבואי ציונה

הת משה ויהודית
לכל אשה נעבית

כחולתי בתמינה
ובתנים הרוניות

את ראשו פרועת
כבואי ציונה

עשרת בעלת כפיץ
כחולתי בתמינה

יחד נשים ואנשים
כבואי ציונה

כרביש נהר זמזמפת
כחולתי בתמינה

נכיים ככל אלה
כבואי ציונה

יהודים בשבע אמות
לכבוד נכבצית

כחולתי בתמינה
ושבע אמות דמברית

הוק נל בלגות
כבואי ציונה

יפי שבת ומועדים
למענת מוחותים

כחולתי בתמינה
ובוערי הארתות

אוי על דילול שפמות
כבואי ציונה

היו נפשות נפלות
כחולתי בתמינה

צבאה נכשני
כבואי ציונה

כתי פטר המרת
כחולתי בתמינה

שמחו חילדים
כבואי ציונה

כאין כיה לשפז
כמא בתמינה

היו וקיים ישכנו
כקדם כציונה

ובצוק יתנו

the Yemeni Lamentations

to other Jews, even in the face of the drastic holocaust that is destroying the Jewish people.

Books like this are usually entitled "The Black Book". But this is really only a book of tears. For in it are collected the tears of the gentle orphans who were stripped of the crown of their parents' faith in the G-d of Jewry and in His holy Torah; the tears of their martyred parents whose orphans were robbed from them both in this world and in the world-to-come; and the tears of Jewry at large for its children who were sundered from its Torah and torn from its faith in the Holy Land -- by Jews!

---Moshe Shonfeld, 1944



Beis Yaakov girls in a Polish village.

INTRODUCTION

The tragedy of European Jewry has reached its nadir as these lines are being written. The situation of our people is horrifying, and whoever has attempted to describe it has not found the means of expressing the extent of the cruelty, torture and persecution to which European Jewry has been subjected. It is no exaggeration to say that all of Europe has turned into one great cemetery for its Jews. Who could have imagined such a systematic annihilation of millions of Jews with no consideration given to the aged, to women, or to children -- annihilation unparalleled in the history of our people!

Agudath Israel¹ attempted to form a rescue committee to save the remaining Jews of Europe. We felt that even though the Jewish people are divided into several factions with widely divergent perspectives and goals, it was nevertheless imperative for us to unite into a single committee to rescue our unfortunate brethren. Committees of this kind, which included all major Jewish organizations, were established in Jerusalem, London and New York. Our goal was the formation of a separate committee which would be dedicated exclusively to rescue work. Unfortunately, we did not succeed in this, and, instead of a special committee, we were compelled to settle for an umbrella group comprised of assorted organizations and parties.

Even before this group was formed, we demanded the establishment of a special Appeal to Save European Jewry, a widespread appeal that would provide the enormous sums of money needed to rescue European Jewry. However, our demand was set aside by the Jewish Agency with the claim that it was impossible to focus on collecting funds for the Jews of Europe, since it was imperative to build the homeland. We replied, "What good is a homeland without a people?" Ultimately, it was agreed to merge this appeal with another one.

1. Agudath Israel, an organization of rabbis and observant Jews, was founded in 1912 on the German-Polish border with the purpose of fighting Zionism.



Cheder kids in Cracow, Poland before World War II.

under non-war conditions, would have received a full traditional education. Should their coming to the Holy Land be the factor that caused them to be torn from the bosom of their parents and from the Torah and Judaism? We explained to them that this affair would cause a major scandal and that all the fury pent up within Jews over the horrible destruction of European Jewry would burst forth if these children were taken away from their faith.

We explained to them that, as believing Jews, our faith is the content of our lives; that at this period when the nation is in dire straits, Jewish faith is the source of all of our hopes and from it we draw strength and courage in these confused times. We pointed out to them the sacrifices made by the Jews in exile for the Torah and for their faith. If they would give the Teheran orphans a nonreligious education, this would arouse great disillusionment and we would not be responsible for the reaction or the results. We explained that if a Kulturkampf must take place, now is not the time for it; not now when the Jewish people is being destroyed in fire and in blood. We pleaded, we begged, and we warned; but they refused to hear us. We wished to prevent fraternal strife if at all possible. We turned to the heads of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, London and New York: to Weizman, to Brodetsky; but we found no ear willing to hear our demands. Therefore, let these gentlemen not protest. They forced a battle upon us, for we could not consent to drown the scandal in an ocean of silence.

In this book, we present a brief review of the entire affair of the Teheran children. It is an incomplete description, for paper can not contain the entire story of this tragic affair -- of how; in the midst of the days of tempest and confusion in Jewry, the heads of the Palestinian settlement could not rise above their small-mindedness and created this scandal which shocked all of Jewry in Palestine and abroad.

And then came the affair of the Teheran children. These children were brands plucked from the Nazi hellfire, the remnants of the remnants. All of us saw in them a symbol of the horrible tragedy that befell European Jewry. As soon as we found out that the children would be coming to Palestine, we began to negotiate for them in order to fulfill our responsibility to raise them in a religious manner. We held numerous conversations with Mrs. Henrietta Szold, president of Hadassah, and with all the members of the Jewish Agency. We explained that it was impossible, after the destruction of Polish Orthodoxy, that their children should be handed over for irreligious education by secular Jews in Palestine. These children, had they continued to be educated by their parents

Many of our colleagues protested: Why did we prolong negotiations with the Jewish Agency? Why did we demean ourselves? Why did we not know in advance that they would deceive us? But we are content to have demonstrated patience in these fatiguing and unending negotiations. We are satisfied that we withstood the test until the absolutely last moment, that our conscience is clear. At a time when the Jewish people is gushing blood, we did not seek a war: we sought understanding. We sought to establish one bridge after another, to unite brothers rather than sunder them. But they did not wish that. They ignored us. The true attitude of those who speak loftily about Jewish unity and Jewish love was here demonstrated clearly. They are the people who ignore these issues out of narrow-minded factionalism. Not even the great tragedy of the Jewish people had the power to show them the way of understanding and truth.

However tragic this affair, the plight of the Teheran children has, nonetheless, opened the eyes of the Jewish public in the Holy Land and abroad to what is going on in Palestine in the religious and spiritual arenas. If initially this was strictly the case for the Teheran children, today already the question is being asked about the entire disillusioning situation of spirit and faith in Palestine. The case of the Teheran children serves as a sample of the overall situation in Palestine which has become a laboratory of sorts: for every one-thousand Jewish children brought in, one-thousand Jews step out devoid of Torah and mitzvos.

The Teheran children will go down in Jewish history as an example of physical and spiritual holocaust. "Teheran children" will symbolize the conflict within the Jewish people as to the shaping of its form and purpose and essence -- a battle between historical Torah-loyal Jewry on the one hand, and, on the other hand, secular Jewry which seeks to remove the nation

from the authority of G-d's Torah and is taking advantage of the tragic circumstances of the holocaust that enveloped the Jewish people.

In this book, we shall also point out the sad role played by the Mizrahi organization in the development of this scandal. The Mizrahi has no formal policy and wavers between two principles: the authority of the Torah and the authority of nationalism. Sometimes the first takes precedence, but most of the time, the second does. The internal fluctuation is the reason for Mizrahi's lack of success in education over the past twenty-five years: for no innocent child can grasp two-faceness; he is sensitive to contradictions. In the case of the Teheran children, too, Mizrahi demonstrated that party matters stood above the formation of a united front to save the children from spiritual annihilation, above the unity of the nation and above the love of one's fellow-Jews about which Mizrahi speaks so much. All our proposals for rapprochement with the Mizrahi in the matter of the Teheran children were rejected.

We hesitated long over whether to publish this book, whether to spotlight the shadows or to remain silent. But because of our love for our fellow-Jews, we are fully aware that reproof is necessary, that it is imperative to uncover the sores in our communal life just as a doctor picks open a wound in order to heal it, despite the pain of the patient. Fully aware that at the most serious moments in the life of our people, its prophets, its teachers, and its leaders did not stop reproving it -- moreover, at just such times they examined their private and public deeds ever more scrupulously to seek a cure for collective ills -- we find it proper to publish this book and to call the leaders of the Jewish public to wake up and see just how far matters have gone in the Palestinian Jewish settlement: to the point where minors, orphans, the children of martyrs, were removed from their faith and the Torah, not in the lands of the nations but in the Holy

Land itself! This battle has been joined against our will, but we shall continue to fight until some change comes about.

The situation of Jewry is awesome. The best and the finest of our people are being destroyed. We cannot fathom why this is happening to us, but we are certain that these must be the final pangs of the Messianic coming; and we, believers, sons of believers, can only reaffirm our great faith that our redemption is near. We see that we can rely only upon our Father in heaven.

All our appeals to the conscience of mankind, to the free world, to enlightened humanity, to the bearers of the flags of liberty and democracy fighting for human rights, to the governments of liberty and equality, were answered with one word: "Bermuda"! Why should a mankind that stuffed its ears so as not to hear the cries of women and children, the cries of millions of our fellow-Jews, the cries of those being butchered daily, now listen to our appeals and our protests? If ultimately we have no one to rely on except our Father in heaven, the question must be asked, "Is now the time to rebel against G-d? Isn't it time now to come closer to our Father in heaven? Can we allow the Holy Land, the King's palace, to stray so far from original Judaism? We focus all our hopes on the Holy Land: Can there be a land without a people? What good is the motherland if its people are being annihilated, if while we are occupied with building the land, Jewry's population centers are being destroyed one after the other?" The remnants of Jewry in Zion must realize that something must change in our mode of life, that we must draw some conclusion from the stormy events of our times, from the great destruction of the Jewish people.

Are we going to delude ourselves into thinking that love of fellow-Jews means to close our eyes and to let the evil in our midst spread even further? Surely we rejoice and are

1. The Anglo-American Conference on Refugees was held in Bermuda on April 19-30, 1943.

enthusiastic at every blade of grass that grows and at every stone put into place in the Holy Land. Every Jew in the Holy Land is worth his weight in gold. Under no circumstances will we agree with those who attribute to us a lack of love for Jews and for the Holy Land. But that love demands from us that we study in depth the bitter situation that has developed in Palestine in matters of the spirit and religion. The affair of the Teheran children is only an example of the abyss into which the new Jewish settlement is sliding as a result of the policy of pushing Orthodoxy aside over the past twenty-five years.

Without G-d's rule, without believing in the One Who made the world, there is no national unity, there is no authority, there is no communal discipline, and there is no common language. There are 1,001 factions in the Jewish community. Where is love of one's fellow Jew? Where is internal discipline even after Agudath Israel is left out? Where is self-sacrifice for Jewry at large? Where is participation in the anguish of the Jewish people at its destruction? The Holy Land as the center, the heart of Jewry, should be the place where mourning and pain are felt most, yet there seems to be no end to the dancing and celebration. In what direction is the Jewish settlement headed? Does it have any direction? If anything, it has 1,001 directions rather than one. What is happening in education? What is happening to youth? What is the content of its life? Why is this youth apathetic to whatever happens to Jewry? Does it empathize with the pain of the nation and its suffering? Is it possible to build Jewry strictly on the basis of land and language? Is it possible to exchange "Sh'ma Yisrael" -- the rich Jewish tradition of millennia -- for secular nationalism?

And what is the situation regarding modesty of women and family purity? The problem of population growth which became an issue in the Jewish settlement answers the question: Someone is quoted as having said, "If 150,000 religious people

would settle in the Holy Land, they would soon become a million; and if a million nonreligious would come, they would decline to 250,000." And now it has become necessary to organize a special committee to protect the honor of Jewish women. How far we have fallen!

Where is the beauty and the glory of the Sabbath, of the Jewish Holy Days? And where is our sacred Torah which has accompanied us throughout the generations? Is it possible to take the dregs and the lees from the cultures of the world's nations and to translate them into Hebrew, to throw out all that is precious and good in our holy Torah, and to blend what is left and to call this pottage Jewish culture?

Just as it is impossible for a mother to close her eyes to a child's bad behavior even if he is her most precious son, so is it impossible to maintain an ostrich policy of closing one's eyes to the faults of the Yishuv (settlement). Because of our love of Jews, we must open up Jewish eyes to what is taking place in the Yishuv, to demand and demand again changes for the better. G-d is waiting for us. It is impossible to build a holy land while removing its soul from it. It is impossible to remove portions of Judaism, as did the Reformers in their day, and to say that this is Judaism. It is no longer feasible to continue along this road.

The world is in confusion. Destruction confronts us at every step. The attitudes of the world's nations to the Jews vary. Some wish to destroy us, and some seek to discover the nucleus and the content of Judaism. But where will they find it today—in the Polish ghettos? In the ruins of the European Jewish cities? Or in the Holy Land? And will they find pure Judaism here?

We do not seek war with anyone nor do we seek to cause anyone anguish. Our heart is breaking over the disunity in Jewry, but we must make every effort to change the situation in the Yishuv, to bring about a decisive turning point in the life

here so that its inhabitants will see where they are headed and return to the Torah and the tradition of Jewry.

Let us shake off the dust of the exile, all the ideologies foreign to the Jewish Torah which we took or were smuggled to us from the nations of the world. Let us return to our new-old Torah. Like Ezra the Scribe, who, in his time, purified our people of non-Jewish women, so let us purify our camp of foreign ideals and idols. G-d's voice calls to us from the midst of the tempest, demanding self-appraisal and repentance. Let His voice penetrate through our ears to our hearts and to our core. Let the response of Jewry as a whole be heard: "I shall go and return to my first husband." A turning point must come in the Yishuv: a turning point, not a civil war. An end to disunity based on love for one's fellow-Jew. If the Yishuv comes closer to this turning point, that will be in the merit of the Teheran children and the result of this volume, which has no purpose other than to serve as a rallying cry to the Yishuv to bestir itself and do return to the Redeemer of Jewry and so to bring about the ultimate redemption.

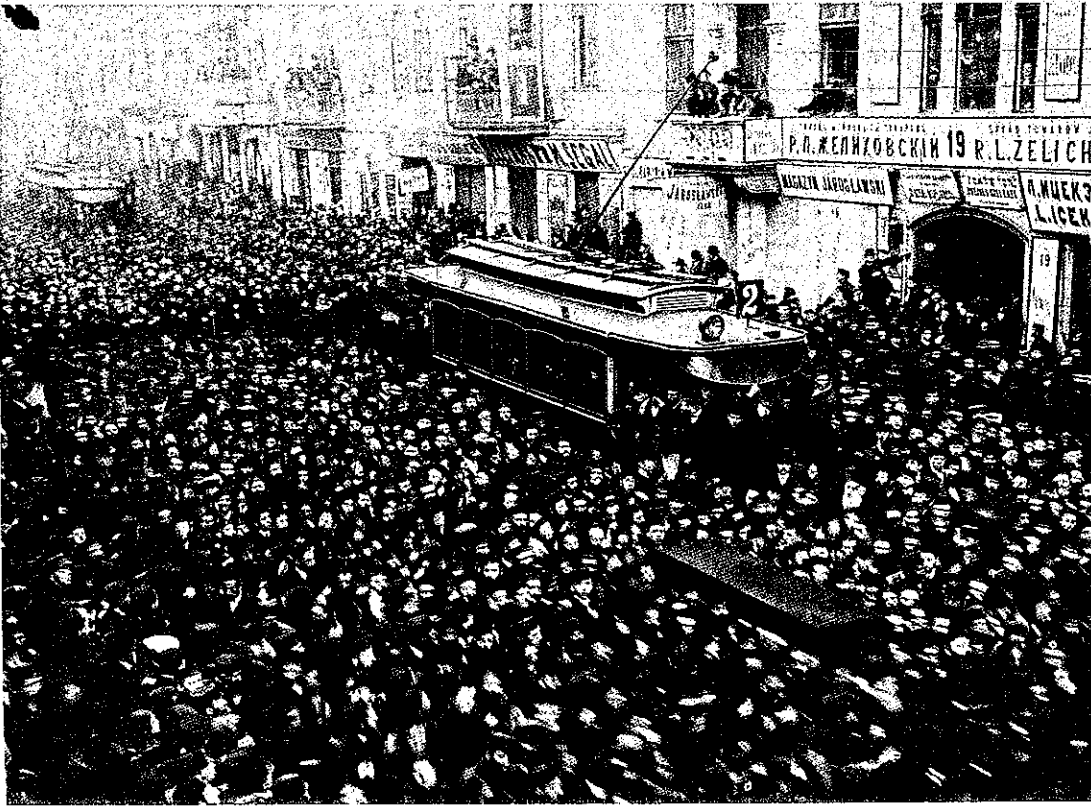
CHAPTER I

JEWISH EDUCATION IN POLAND

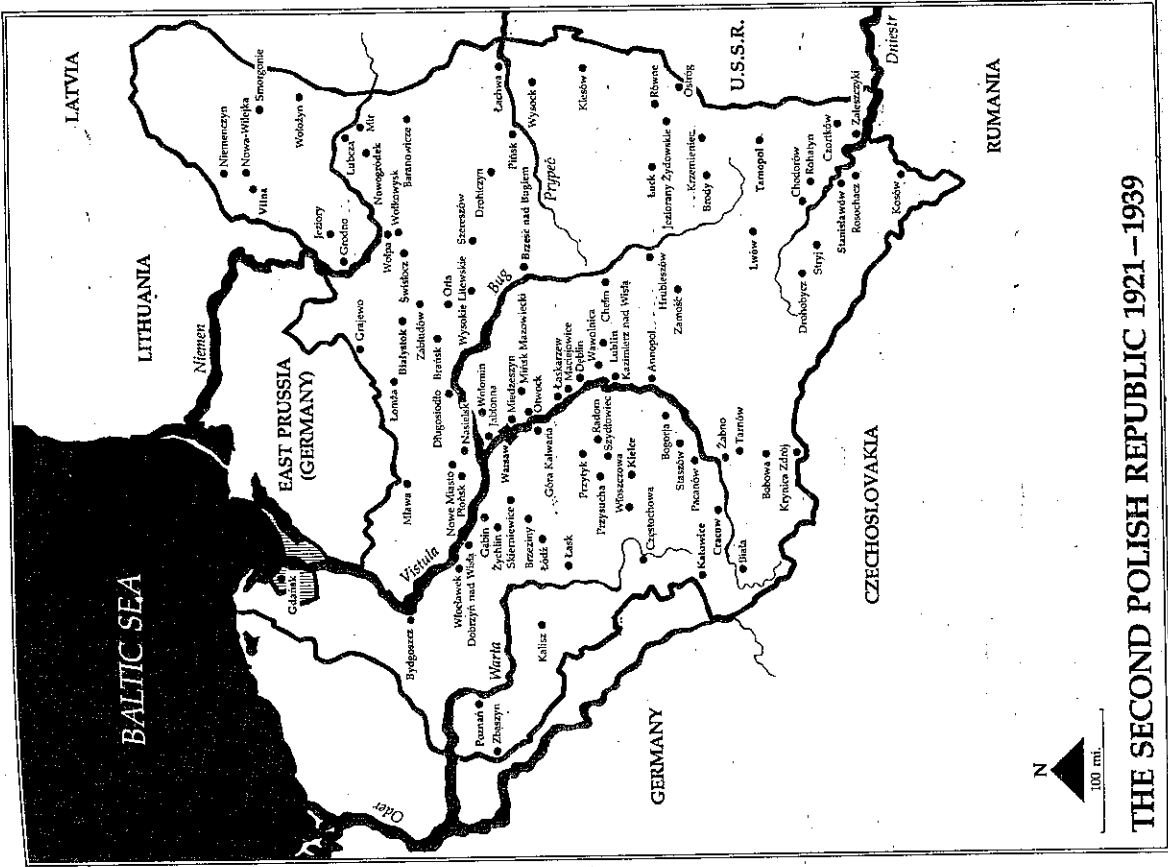
One cannot really understand the great evil done to the Teheran children without knowing the educational situation in Poland, the country of origin of these children. A person who was never in Poland and who does not know the character of Polish Jewry may be surprised at the deep emotion and shock of Orthodox Jews in the Holy Land and throughout the world at the sundering of Polish refugee children from Torah education and their being forcibly educated as atheists. Such a person will ask, "How are these children different from other refugee children who are also given an atheistic education?" Only someone who saw Polish Jewry in its heyday, that original, vibrant Jewry, loyal to the Torah and mitzvos (commandments), so full of Torah-study and so attached to chassidism -- all of whose ways were stamped with the seal of tradition and religiosity - only someone who knew the Jews of Poland as ready to give their lives for the tradition of their forefathers, as feeling no sacrifice too great so long as they could educate their children to Torah and fear of G-d; only such a person can evaluate the tragic loss to Orthodox Jewry and the sin committed against the parents of these children by the men who dared treat them as if they were their own chattels: the officials of the Jewish Agency.

Overview

Poland was first in Torah and in mitzva-fulfillment from the time Jews went to live there and remained so until its destruction. Even during the holocaust years, Polish Jews demonstrated wondrous self-sacrifice for Judaism. The horrors of the years 5408-5409 were relived as was the glory of Jewish sanctification of G-d's Name by Polish Jewry. Their traditions had been maintained from generation to generation. Now, as then, Jews jumped into flames to save Torah scrolls; Jews were



The funeral of Rabbi Elia Haim Meisel (1821-1912) in Łódź.



THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC 1921-1939



Yeshiva students on Nałewki Street. Warsaw, 1928.

sentenced to die for refusing to desecrate the Sabbath, for maintaining secret kosher slaughtering, for maintaining religious schools in which they taught the Torah to Jewish children in secret; and Jewish girls committed suicide rather than be violated. Not only rabbis and chassidim and scholars but also ordinary people, plain Jews of the masses, rose up to sanctify G-d. Even the apparently "empty" Jews of Poland demonstrated how full of sanctity they were. Such were the fruits of the education given and received by the Jews of Poland.

At a time when more than 50% of the Polish populace was illiterate, there was no Jewish boy who did not learn the Hebrew alphabet. Even the most ignorant Jews wished their children to know how to pray, how to say *kaddish* after them. There was no village in Poland without a *cheider* or a Talmud Torah, and even the Jews who lived isolated in hamlets would hire an instructor to live in their homes and teach their children the Torah. Jews who lived in abject poverty would scrimp from their food money to pay tuition. This was not an ordinary drive to give their children culture or education, for in Poland there were government public schools for the Jews, closed on the Sabbath and Jewish Holy Days, in which Jewish religion was taught. But these parents did not accept any of this. They strove to give their children a Torah education. Even those children who spent half a day in public school would spend the second half of the day in *chadorim* or Talmud Torahs.

Educational System and Statistics

The different Jewish parties in Poland maintained separate educational networks. We will mention them briefly and then cite statistics that give a clear picture of the educational situation and the educational goals of Polish Jewry.

The Agudath Israel educational institutions were all part of the Chorev Federation which included Talmud Torahs and



Hasidim outside a house of prayer on Saturday. Cracow, 1938.

chadorim for boys under the name Yesodey HaTorah, Bais Yaakov schools for girls, and also preparatory yeshivos and major yeshivos, seminars and seminaries. These educational institutions, operated in a traditional Jewish spirit, had as their goal to raise a generation loyal to the Torah and to fear of G-d and to provide their pupils with knowledge of the written and the oral Torah. In order to fulfill the requirements of the state, which had passed a compulsory education law, the Chorev schools taught a limited amount of secular knowledge, thus obtaining state licensing and freeing their pupils from the obligation to attend government public schools. These secular studies were taught only in the **chadorim**, in the Talmud Torahs, and in the Bais Yaakov schools. The yeshivos taught only Torah without any admixture of secular studies.

Educational institutions in which the language of instruction was Hebrew and which taught in the spirit of secular Zionism were organized into the Tarbus Federation which included kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools and seminaries. In addition, the Zionist Federation maintained schools in which the language of instruction was Yiddish. They were organized as the Schulkult Federation. High schools in which the language of instruction was Polish and which educated in the spirit of Zionism were organized into a network called Dr. Braude's High Schools.

The left-wing labor party established its own educational network called CYSHO (Central-Yiddish School Organization) which included kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools and seminaries. The language of instruction was Yiddish, the goal pure secular Yiddishism. The Mizrachi also had an educational network of its own, Yavneh, which included kindergartens and seminaries. Its educational goal: the Mizrachi spirit.

In addition, the communities maintained their own

educational institutions, the overwhelming majority of which were religious.

All of the above were public educational institutions. There were also private educational institutions, primarily **chadorim**, which maintained their unique integrity.

The figures that follow are taken from very reliable sources. The figures up to 1929 are taken from an article by Dr. Aryeh Tartakower, "The Schools of the Jewish Public in Poland," which appeared in the **Dr. Braude fun Polishhe Yuden**.* The figures up to 1937 are from the **Lexicon fun Polishhe Yuden** (vol. 1)* which was published in 1939 just before the Nazis entered Poland, from the article by G. Hecht, "Twenty Years of Schooling for the Jewish Minority in Poland", and from the article about Agudath Israel in that lexicon. The figures for the Yavneh schools were taken from Dr. Kahane's book **L'Cheshbonah Shel Tkufa**, published by the Yavneh School Society.

A comparison of the figures for institutions and pupils of all the Jewish networks combined with the total number of institutions and pupils in the Chorev network indicates the importance of the Chorev network in education: In 1929 the total number of public educational institutions was 534; Chorev institutions 580. Pupils in all the educational institutions totaled 68,226; in Chorev institutions 73,311. In 1935 all other public educational institutions totaled 679, while there were 1,277 Chorev institutions. The pupils in all the other institutions numbered 83,697; in Chorev institutions 109,500.

Dr. Tartakower, in his article, asserts:

The Chorev network includes a far greater number of institutions and of pupils than all the other

*This is a very rare book, Mr. B. Mintz generously made it available to us from his private library.

Jewish educational organizations in Poland combined.

Also Mr. Hecht, in his article in the *Lexicon*, writes:

The most common and the most popular were and remain the Chorev and the Talmud Torahs where thousands of children are raised in a pure Orthodox spirit.

Regarding the above figures, it should be pointed out that they do not include the private **chadorim** and Talmud Torahs which were not part of the Chorev network and which forewent any government privileges in order to keep secular studies out of their programs. All of these were absolutely chassidic institutions of the old kind which did not deviate from their tradition. We do not have accurate figures for the number of children that attended these schools. But we can go by the figures given by Dr. Tartakower for Warsaw, where the private **chadorim** had 8,000 pupils, **half** the Jewish children of elementary school age in Warsaw. If this was the case in Warsaw, where "new winds" were blowing, it was all the more so in the conservative small towns. One must also include the yeshiva students in Lithuanian Poland, in yeshivos united by the Vaad Hayeshivos, in which thousands of students studied.

Another interesting fact that we learn from these figures is that in the various educational networks there is a decline in the number of institutions and pupils or a very small increase; whereas at the same time there is an obviously great increase in the number of institutions and pupils in the Chorev networks. It would seem that parents perceived the negative results of nonreligious education and were especially careful to give their children traditional, uncompromising education. In the Tarbus network, one sees a decline in the number of schools and a small increase in the number of pupils. About CYSHO, Mr.

Hecht notes in his article in the *Lexicon*, "There are no current numbers, but there is a definite decline in the number of schools and pupils." Shulkult, too, shows a decline in the number of pupils. Braude's High Schools shows a decline in the number of schools and of pupils. In the Yavneh system, there is a degree of increase which is not even 14% of the increase in the Chorev system and is only 7% of Orthodox education in general. The Tachkemoni seminary operated by Mizrachi in Warsaw was also in constant decline, as indicated by the figures from the *Lexicon*: In 1925, there were 206 students: 1930 -- 220; 1931 -- 204; 1932 -- 185; 1933 -- 178; 1934 -- 169; 1935 -- 159.

These numbers draw a lucid picture of Polish Jewry at its peak: 80% of Polish Jewish children received a Torah education. From their youngest days, treasures of traditional Judaism were opened to them. Even those who in maturity left the ways of their fathers still came under the protective illumination of the Torah to keep them from being entirely lost to Jewry.

The Chorev schools, especially the Bais Yaakov girls schools, inculcated in their pupils a firm Torah world perspective. The Agudah youth organizations comprised masses of organized youth. In 1935, Zeirei Agudath Israel had 25,000 members in 450 branches; B'nos Agudath Israel had 20,000 members in 300 branches; and Poalei Agudath Israel had 10,800 members in 152 branches -- together a total of some 60,000 organized young people, to say nothing of tens of thousands affiliated nonmembers. All of these were products of the Orthodox schools. When tragedy struck, they remained firm. The ninety-three teachers and students of Bais Yaakov who became a symbol of Jewish sanctity and purity derived their spiritual heroism from a Bais Yaakov education in the spirit of Agudath Israel.³

³These girls took their own lives rather than be defiled by the invading Nazis.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILDREN GATHER

Singly and in small groups, the Jewish refugee children of Poland came together in Persia between 1939 and 1942. They suffered three years of wandering, hunger, illness and deprivation. Some of them escaped from the Nazi sword alone - without parents, without friends -- like hunted animals. Some of them crossed the border into Russia together with their parents and, with their own hands, buried their fathers and their mothers in the snows of the Siberian steppes -- to find themselves suddenly entirely alone in the world. Suffering hunger pangs, they worked at slave labor for a piece of dry bread. They dealt, they begged, they wandered from place to place, traversing all of Greater Russia. They met a bewildering variety of people, some whom attacked them or took advantage of them..

But the children did not give up. They did not accept their fate, nor did they turn their backs on their Jewishness. They walked southward always -- toward Palestine, where they hoped to return to normal human living, particularly to that life of wholesome Jewishness they had experienced in their parents' homes. Only Jewish children who had been raised in Jewish tradition at home, in the *cheider*, in the Bais Yaakov, and in the Jewish streets of Poland -- only they could have been so stubborn; for only they were equipped with an ironclad desire to live with the traits of faith and trust in G-d's imminent help.

Despite the circumstances in which they were living, they knew how to care for the divine image in which they had been molded, without turning into bandits and robbers. They were wise and inordinately clever, suspicious and purposeful in the extreme, yet they maintained the unique characteristics of the Jews: mercy, love of kindness, self-sacrifice for others, family feelings and, most of all, a desire for a life of Torah and fulfillment

of its sacred commandments. They hoped to find in Persia, which they regarded as the corridor to Palestine, the possibility of a proper Jewish life. But suddenly they found themselves subject to the fury of the camp *madrachim* (teachers/counselors) who were forced upon them.

The Polish Government established a large camp in Teheran for all the refugee children of Polish origin. The Government appreciated that it was necessary to separate the Jewish children from the gentile children because of the requirements of their religious education. It, therefore, gratefully granted the request of the Jewish Agency office in Teheran to establish a separate camp for the Jewish children. It relinquished their supervision to the Jewish Agency office while continuing to provide for their material needs. Mr. Shaffer, the representative of the Jewish Agency in Teheran, appointed as director of the children's camp Menachem Rudnitsky, a semi-assimilated Jewish refugee lawyer from Vilna. Rudnitsky gave over the educational supervision to David Levinberg, a member of HaShomer Hatzair, also a refugee, and the only adult among the first arrivals in Teheran who knew Hebrew. His knowledge of the language, it seems, won him the supervision of the children's education. Levinberg selected a staff of *madrachim* from among his friends and acquaintances. Most of these people were neither pedagogically nor personally qualified for the job, and surely not Jewishly qualified. A large number of them did not even know how to speak Yiddish, the language of the refugee children.¹

"Pull" was the major factor in determining who was to be a *madrach*. This explains why for 733 children in the camp there were sixty-five *madrachim*; in other words, one *madrach* for every eleven children. No educational institution has such a ratio of educators to students.²

1. Dr. Hirschberg, who went to Palestine from Teheran, stated this fact at a meeting of the *madrachim* in Atilt.

2. These figures were provided by Mrs. Szold in a speech she gave to the *madrachim* in Haifa two days before the children arrived in Palestine.

Religious Persecution

In August 1942, the special Jewish camp was established. With the approach of the High Holy Days, Rosh HaShona and Yom Kippur, the children expressed the desire for a Torah life even more strongly. For the first time in three years, they could hope to observe the Jewish holidays under more or less normal circumstances. The **madrachim**, who had been directed by the Jewish Agency to prepare the children for life in a secular "Holy" Land, took advantage of the means at their disposal to silence and to uproot systematically the children's desire for faith and tradition. The details about life in Teheran were submitted in testimony by two 16-year-old Teheran children, Nachman Elbaum and Avrohom Frankel.

Rosh HaShona-- On Rosh HaShona eve, all the children gathered together to pray Ma'ariv. The praying was enthusiastic, upsetting and full of crying. The children prayed the way their forefathers had prayed on the High Holy Days; they prayed for the safety of the members of their families and for their own welfare. The **madrachim** regarded the children's praying as "hysterical tears." In the middle of the praying, David Levinberg entered and demanded that they stop and hurry to the festive party in honor of the holiday. During the party, the **madrachim** and the Jewish Agency representatives did not refrain from smoking cigarettes even though Rosh HaShona fell on the Sabbath that year.

In the morning, the children asked to be allowed to pray at the synagogue in Teheran. Despite the fact that prayers began at 6:00 A.M., they were not allowed to leave the camp until 9:00 A.M. They arrived at the synagogue during the reading of the Torah. The **madrachim** forbade the children to enter the

1. Bracha Habas quotes Rudnitsky to this effect in her article in Davar of February 23, 1943.

synagogue, so they stayed outside in the garden. A half hour later, they were taken away and led to a cafe. Some of the children sneaked away and entered the synagogue. These children were forcibly removed and driven back to camp. The next morning, when they were not permitted to go to the synagogue to hear the blowing of **shofor** (the ram's horn), they requested a **shofor** to blow for themselves: they were denied it.

Yom Kippur-- After the Kol Nidre prayer, Levinberg announced, "Children, supper!" All the **madrachim** sat down in the office, opened the windows wide and ate a meal in front of the children. Nachman Elbaum testified that he remained in the hall until late, reciting Psalms. A **madrach**, who ordered him to stop, put out the light. On Yom Kippur morning, the children were taken into town by bus, even though the camp was no more than a twenty-minute walk from the synagogue.⁴ They were in the synagogue for only a short time, the object being to arouse the sympathy of the wealthy Teheran Jews for the children. As a matter of fact, they contributed a total of 60,000 Tomans for the camp. One boy asked to remain for Yizkor so that he could commemorate his dead parents; a **madrach** named Gleicher hit him and forcibly removed him from the synagogue.

Sukos--The children were not allowed to go to the town to pray. When they requested an **estrog** (citron) to fulfill the commandment of Leviticus (23:40), they were told, "For three years you managed without an **estrog**; you will manage without it this year, too." For Simchas Torah a ball was arranged. They were given bread and butter and ham to celebrate the holiday. A play was presented, showing the destruction of the Holy Temple, and Jews mourning and bewailing its destruction.

1. This fact was attested to by Mrs. Shertok (Sharett), who visited Teheran on behalf of the Jewish Agency, at a meeting of the Committee for Polish Jewry.

Then *chalutzim* (Zionist pioneers) went on stage and told them, "Not with prayer and mourning, but with bricks will the house of Israel be built."

Kosher food—The kitchen was nonkosher.⁵ A little effort would have gotten the agreement and assistance of the Polish Government to arrange a kosher kitchen, but the *madrichim* refused to lift a finger for that purpose. At first, many children refrained from eating the nonkosher food. They asked Levinberg to increase the amount of bread they received to replace the meat or other dishes which they would not eat. He refused, claiming there was no money. At that time they were spending hundreds of Tomans for theater and movies. On the occasion of Levinberg's birthday, the *madrichim* bought 500 Tomans worth of wine, arranged a ball for all the *madrichim*, got drunk and were so rowdy that the police had to arrest a number of them.

The children who ate kosher subsisted solely on the regular bread allowance, which was also given to those who ate the nonkosher food. There were instances of fainting and heart attacks due to weakness and hunger. Levinberg said to a doctor who was attending a child who had passed out (the Frankel boy who is testifying), "No matter; let one or two of them die of hunger and the rest of them will forget about kosher food." The number of those who ate kosher did indeed decrease. Very few could withstand this crisis after having starved for three years. Binyamin Gezundheit told Mrs. Wein, a *madricha* at the camp in Chadera, that when he had asked for kosher food in Teheran, he was punished, and they did not give him permitted food until he surrendered and ate nonkosher.

⁵Mrs. Shertok attested to this fact at the above meeting.

Frankel compiled a list of some 250 children who requested kosher food -- besides the little children. Only fourteen children withstood the test and did not yield. They deserve to have their names inscribed: Nachman Elbaum, Avrohom Frankel, Moshe Bunim Glicksbaum and his brother, Shimon Krirsch, David Zwiebel, Elimelech Langbaum, Dov Klinchler and his brother Yosef, Aryeh Stepel, Yosef Weidenfeld, Shmuel Labin, Chaim Eckstein and Dov Flaumenbaum.

In their anguish, the children turned to the brothers Rabbis Halberstam, sons of the Semigroder Rebbe and descendants of the Rebbe of Sanc (Tzanz), who were also refugees in Teheran. One of the brothers, Rabbi Yisroel Halberstam, devoted himself to helping the children and brought the entire situation to the attention of Mr. Pollack, a wealthy Orthodox Jew from Germany, who was extremely upset at hearing the story. Food was immediately sent to the children with Rabbi Halberstam, who was punished by the Jewish Agency by having his monthly stipend, which was given to all refugee rabbis in Teheran, denied him.¹

Rabbi Halberstam did not stop trying to help the children who ate kosher. Once, when he went to visit in the camp, the *madrich Avraham Borenstein* chased him out and took him to the police where he alleged that he had come to disturb the peace of the camp. The Jewish Agency representatives convinced the police authorities to forbid the Rabbis Halberstam entry to the camp. The rabbis did not give up though, and sent food parcels to the children.

The *madrichim*, worried that the number of kosher eaters might increase, opened 'negotiations' with the group of kosher eaters. David Levinberg himself negotiated with the children, promising to supply them with special kosher products on two

¹ Rabbi Yisroel Halberstam, letter to the Agudath Israel Executive in Jerusalem.

conditions: 1) that they would not accept food from the city; and 2) that they would not accept additional children into their group. For lack of choice, they agreed to both conditions. Esther Meier and Hertz Naftali Meier were the first two children who wished to join the kosher eaters, but the **madrichim** did not allow them to do so.

The **madrichim** did not keep Levinberg's promise. From day to day, they limited the rations of the kosher eaters; they did not even give them salt. The children hungered horribly. All the other children were given two kilograms (four pounds) of rice daily. The kosher eaters, of course, could not eat rice because it was boiled in nonkosher pots. On the Sabbath, when they received additional bread, Kirstein, who was distributing the food, gave them stale bread that was two weeks old. They went to complain to Levinberg, but he told Kirstein to give them no other food. So they were compelled to smuggle in food from the Rabbis Halberstam whose packages which were sent openly were returned by the **madrichim**.²

Prayer--The children requested a special place for praying, but were refused; they were not even allowed to pray. The **madrichim** forbade them to pray in their tents, claiming that "It's not nice to pray in a place where you sleep." The children wanted to pray in the sewing room when it was not in use and that, too, was forbidden. Madrich Borenstein told the children that they could not pray publicly, but that each one might pray alone in his own quarters. "In Russia, too," he argued, "it is forbidden for children to pray in public." When the children finally located an empty tent that was not being used at all and made that into their 'synagogue', the **madrichim** began to use that tent for treating children with lice.

2. Rabbi Yisroel Halberstam, letter to the Agudath Israel Executive in Jerusalem.

Levinberg ordered the **madrichot** to make sure that the little children did not say **kaddish** for their parents. The witness Frankel once assembled a number of children to recite **kaddish**. Levinberg yelled at him, "It would be better for these children to forget their parents and get the awful horror out of their memories." Frankel replied, "If you are concerned for the welfare of the children, don't let the **madrichot** steal the children's food and don't compel seven-year-old children to wash their own laundry by hand."

Phylacteries--Only a few children had phylacteries of their own, which they had managed to protect throughout their wanderings. There were children whose phylacteries were the only objects that they had managed to save, but there were very few of them so they had to take turns donning them--in secret, when the **madrichim** would not notice.

The witnesses Elbaum and Frankel made a list of sixty older children who requested phylacteries and prayer books. Rabbi Halberstam passed on the list to the Agudath Israel Executive which immediately sent out sixty sets of phylacteries and prayer books to Teheran by air. When the parcel arrived, it made a great stir among the children. The **madrichim** were at a loss. Levinberg said that he regarded the shipment of phylacteries as "a genuine educational tragedy." Those who received phylacteries signed a letter sent to Rabbi Y. M. Lewin of the Agudath Israel Executive in Jerusalem:

"First we wish to inform you that we received from Rabbi Yisroel Halberstam sixty sets of phylacteries and prayer books. Rabbi Halberstam sacrifices himself for us. Even though it is very difficult to visit us because they disturb him greatly, he nevertheless visits the children's tents very often

and, as a result of his talks, the Orthodox children behave properly. He is insulted frequently, but he studies with us. He made every effort, at great sacrifice, for us to have kosher food. Please mention us favorably to your father-in-law (the Rebbe of Ger)."

There are sixty-five children's signatures on the letter.

Rabbi Halberstam writes in a letter to the Agudath Israel Executive:

"I cannot describe the great joy of all of us when the children saw the phylacteries and the prayer books. I made a big feast for the children at which I spoke at length about the commandment to don phylacteries. Even so, I have great anguish because I myself did not know that there are, thank G-d, so many Orthodox boys who want to pray every day. Many genuine tears were shed by many boys who did not receive phylacteries; they were very noisy and upset about it. The truth is: They are Orthodox and they pray. And they did not leave me alone until I swore to them that I would write you immediately and request phylacteries for them...."

At a lecture for *madrichim* in Atlit (upon arrival in Palestine), David Levinberg spoke about the children, saying "I want you to know that the children are in the habit of taking whatever we give them and that is what happened to those phylacteries. As soon as they heard that there was a growing list for getting phylacteries, they all signed up and then they sold them for 50 Tomans." One of the *madrichot*, Brusova, formerly a teacher in and then principal of an orphanage in Russia, interrupted Levinberg and said, "That is not true!" She was angry and excited. She requested permission to speak, but the chairman did not allow her to speak until the end of the session.

To the question, "How many children sold their phylacteries?" Levinberg had no answer. The *madrichim* finally came up with no more than two instances.¹

The Rabbis Halberstam were punished extremely severely: they were not allowed to join the boatloads of people that went off to Palestine. Rudnitsky, the camp director, announced that as punishment for their interference in camp matters, they would not receive *aliyah* certificates, and Shaffer, the Teheran Jewish Agency representative, promised that even in Palestine they would be harassed mercilessly. No attention was paid to their dockside entreaties, and the police were called to keep them away. The rabbis did not get to Palestine.

Hats and Sidecurls--At a meeting of *madrichim* in Atlit, Dr. Hirshberg said, "The *madrichim* turned every minor question into a problem. For instance, on the question of skullcaps, they created skullcap martyrs."¹ Madrich Borenstein made a policy that children must remove their hats upon coming into the office or during roll call. Whoever refused was suspended from roll call and was denied clothing and other necessities. Nevertheless, there were children who made sacrifices for this, too. When a Boy Scout troop was formed, the children who wore hats were kept out.

Even in the dining room they were forced to eat bareheaded. Binyamin Lipman, age 7, refused. As punishment, he did not get lunch for five days. Once during a meal, the boy stood up and announced, "Children, I have something important to tell you. I want you to know that here we are eating nonkosher food. Don't eat the meat." The *madrich* chased him out. Nevertheless, all the children stopped eating -- and these were children aged 6 and 7! For several days they did not eat meat.

1. This was attested to by Mrs. Hadassah Weidislavsky of Haifa.

As punishment, their food rations were decreased until they were compelled to return to eating the nonkosher meat.

In the port city of Ahwaz, from which the children embarked to Palestine, the following incident took place: A **madricha** wished to compel a group of 7-year-olds to eat bareheaded so she took their hats off their heads. The children took their towels out of their knapsacks and covered their heads with them. The **madricha** took away the towels. The children then covered their heads with the knapsacks, but the **madricha** took those away, too. Then they covered their heads with the empty plates. All this took place in the presence of the "educational director," Levinberg.

On the third day of their trip, Levinberg and Rudnitsky began to take the children's hats off their heads and throw them into the ocean.¹ The captain ordered his sailors to go down in a lifeboat and bring in the floating hats. Rudnitsky even hit one of the children because he refused to bare his head.

Some of the children had kept their sidecurls throughout all their years of wandering in Russia, but in Teheran the **madrachim** sheared them. The children who would not allow this desecration had their sidecurls shorn at night when they were sleeping. Madrich Gleicher tried to cut off the sidecurls of the witness, Nachman Elbaum, but he failed. Elbaum is the only boy who still has his sidecurls.

Dr. Hirshberg, from Czenstochowa, was hired to teach Hebrew. Schaffer and Levinberg stipulated that he could not teach anything linked to the Torah or religion.¹

On Friday nights, they used to arrange an **oneg Shabbat**. Late at night they would bring the children in and light the Sabbath candles -- on the Sabbath. The talks given then were dedicated primarily to fostering anti-religious attitudes. On Sabbaths the **madrichot** would deliberately teach the girls

1. HaTzofeh, February 22, 1943.

1. This was corroborated in a letter from Rabbi Yisroel Halberstam to the Agudath Israel Executive.

writing. In the sewing room, they would work on the Sabbath -- on orders from Madricha Saltzman. The religious children protested against this and they did not submit until they were hit.

The witness Frankel told his friends a **chassidic** tale when they were in India. At night the **madrich** took him out of bed and put him into solitary confinement as punishment. This incident was related to Rabbi Dr. Kalman Kahane by Rabbi Hager, a Mizrahi leader.

The **madrachim** morally corrupted the older girls. Madricha Rachel systematically attempted to corrupt the older boys by telling them to spend time with the older girls late at night. The **madrachim** and **madrichot** themselves behaved immorally and influenced the children negatively.

When a group of children sang, "Their idols are made of silver and gold" (Psalms 115:4), Levinberg commented, "Just as you demand respect for your faith, so must you not make fun of idols because you do not discriminate between one religion and another."

Yonah Cohen, who met with the children when they arrived in Palestine and spoke with them at length, wrote in **HaTzofeh** of February 28, 1943:

The religious children are alone in their faith. The difficulties of life in the concentration camps, the long wanderings and the shock at the multiple faces of tragedy--all served to keep their lips tightly sealed.

The first action of the **madrachim** who accompanied this caravan was to direct the children's education toward a "new life" in Palestine which has as its content labor and manual endeavor. They taught the children appropriate songs: "We sing to

you, motherland and mother, the song of songs to labor," or "Rest has come to the weary and relaxation to the laborer from Bait Alfa to Nahalal." All of this was planned toward a specific unalterable goal.

When the souls of the religious children twitched in pain, thirsty for the word of G-d, they would gather occasionally in the depths of the ship and quench their thirst for G-d by singing, "Kol rimoh v'y'shu'ah b'oholey tzadikim, y'min HaShem oseh choyil." Nobody helped them. And the **madrichim** kept at their own task. They gathered together whomever they could and sang with them and told them, "Dearest children, we are going to a new life in Eretz Yisrael. Why do you need a hat on your head?"

Embezzlement

Although clothing had been provided for the children, many of them did not receive it. Mr. Pollack, the rich philanthropist from Teheran, had provided sweaters for all the children, but the **madrichim** distributed only 300 sweaters (out of 733); no one knew what happened to the rest of them. It turned out that the **madrichot** were unraveling the sweaters and knitting new dresses for themselves out of the wool. The same was true for shoes. The children left Persia barefoot and in torn garments, and that is how they arrived in Palestine. **Haaretz** of February 19, 1943, the day after the children's arrival, stated:

Many of the children do not have shoes and go about barefoot. Others wear thin, torn garments which cannot protect them from the winter cold. The girls, for the most part, are wrapped in shawls and light dresses. Very few of them have warm sweaters or coats. One's heart is pained at seeing this group.

Rudnitsky received the sum of five thousand Tomans to buy shoes and garments for the children before they set out for Palestine. When they were in Ahwaz, he went into town and promised to return with the clothing and the shoes. He returned at night with a cart loaded with three boxes. One of the children opened a box out of curiosity, and he saw that the box was full of bottles of wine. When Rudnitsky was asked to explain this, he replied that he had bought wine for the children in case they should fall sick during the voyage. While they were aboard ship, the **madrichim** had a ball-every night, got drunk on wine, and stuffed themselves with chocolate and halvah. The children got none of this. It was all for the **madrichim**.

In India, British officials wanted to give each child a set of clothing and a pair of shoes. Rudnitsky arranged matters otherwise. The clothing and the shoes were taken by the **madrichim**. Ultimately, only fifty children were given shoes because they served as "policemen", and some of the girls also received shoes. In Bombay, they took one hundred pairs of shoes on board, but only thirty pairs were given to children. The rest disappeared. The **madricha** Genia Renetska said that she saw some twenty pairs of shoes hidden in **Madricha** Saltzman's room. In **HaTzofeh** of February 22, 1943, Yonah Cohen wrote:

Much material will yet be brought up before the Jewish Agency concerning the behavior of the director of this caravan, Mr. R., about how clothing was distributed. Here is the boy L. His mother, who is about sixty five years old, was not allowed to accompany her son and was left behind in Teheran. Then there is the boy L., about sixteen years old, who was hit by the **madrichim** from HaShomer HaTzair because of the protest meetings that were made against R.

Denying Aliyah

Among all the **madrichim**, there was one man, Belzecki, who was secretly religious. The children sensed this, and in his group all the children prayed. The **madrichim** transferred him to a group of small children. A week before they left Teheran, many of the **madrichim** received induction notices. All the **madrichim** who received such notices were immediately flown to Palestine. The sole exception was Belzecki, who was left behind and was indeed drafted.

The Rabbis Halberstam were not the only individuals to be punished by the denial of an **aliyah** certificate because they were Agudah members. Zelig Winger of Sokolow was originally given an **aliyah** certificate. After it was discovered that he was a member of Agudath Israel, Rudnitsky annulled his certificate, and he was sent to East Africa together with thousands of Christian Poles. Winger requested of Mr. Kalter, who did go to Palestine from Teheran, that he tell his family in America what the Jewish Agency officials had done to him and that they would be responsible if his bones would never be buried among Jews.

Mrs. Byelorus, a pharmacist from Lodz, age 43, told Yakov Katz of Haifa that Rudnitsky had refused to grant her an **aliyah** certificate. When she asked what he expected her to do in Teheran, he replied that she could start profitable work after 10:00 P.M. But he gave her daughter an **aliyah** certificate, saying that she was a pretty girl. The woman had to sneak into the boat in order to get to Palestine.

In contrast, Dr. Eliasberg of Bialystock, whose wife was a Christian and who had educated his granddaughter first as a Catholic and then as a Greek Orthodox, was granted a certificate.¹

¹ Attested to by Yaakov Katz of Haifa.

Investigative Committee

In **HaTzofeh** of February 28, 1943, Yonah Cohen wrote: It was harder to "get away with things" with the older children. They put together a living newspaper in which most of the material was critical of the **madrichim**. The members of the editorial board were Adler, Mannheim, and M. Hager. The closer they came to the Holy Land, the more openly they spoke. They were indeed "a hard nut to crack." On February 16, they held a meeting aboard ship and elected a seven-man committee. Among the committee's tasks: 1) to stir up the **Yishuv** and its institutions so as not to forget those who were left behind in Russia and in Teheran; 2) to bring to the attention of the authorities factual material on the **madrichim**.

The children imagined in their naivete that upon arrival in Palestine they would have the opportunity to publish the terrible deeds of their **madrichim** and that a thorough investigation would immediately take place, and the guilty would receive their appropriate punishment. But the Jewish Agency regarded the **madrichim** as its representatives and itself responsible for everything that happened in Teheran. This was asserted by Mrs. Szold in the following letter:

"24 January 1943

"The Honorable National Committee

"My dear Mr. Yitzhak ben-Tzvi,

"I acknowledge receipt of your letter on the 18th of this month enclosing a copy of a letter by Petach Tikva Municipal Councilman Mr. S. Katz, containing his accusations about the persecution of religious children in the camp in Teheran. I have nothing to say on this subject since all arrangements in the camp

in Teheran were made under the supervision of the Jewish Agency. As you know, its representatives are there.

"On the strength of your letter and the letter from Petach Tikva, I shall ask the Jewish Agency Aliyah Department to look into the matter and to report to me and to write you detailed information on how much justice and truth there is in Mr. Katz's accusations. When I receive the Jewish Agency's reply, I shall inform you.

"Shalom

"Henrietta Szold"

Disappointed children who encountered Rudnitsky on a Tel Aviv street wanted to mete out justice themselves, but passersby saved him from their hands. **HaBoker** of March 15, 1943 carried a story on the attack:

...Rudnitsky demonstrated great hatred toward all children who were not from the left.

The children wished to say kaddish for their parents, but were not allowed to do so. Others wished to pray, but were not permitted to do so. The hats of the religious children were tossed into the sea. Money received by Mr. Rudnitsky from the Jews of Bombay on behalf of the children was not spent for the purpose it was given: shoes were not bought for the children, and when one of the children protested this he was incarcerated.

The Jewish Agency could no longer ignore the situation. The day after the incident, it released the following statement:

A committee appointed by the Jewish Agency to examine the claims connected with the **aliyah** of the Teheran children had gone into action. Its first

hearing of testimony will take place next Thursday. The committee demands that all organizations and individuals refrain from any activity likely to disturb it in fulfilling its task. The committee will present all of its findings to the public as soon as possible.

The committee members are Rabbi Y. L. Fishman, Y. Greenbaum, Dr. H. Sentor, A. Dobkin and M. Shapiro.

Even **HaAretz**, the newspaper loyal to the Jewish Agency, could not ignore this obvious mockery of public opinion by the appointment of the accused to be the judges. In an editorial on March 16, 1943, it wrote:

Yes, this is a mockery. Mockery of public opinion in this **Yishuv** and of human and public common sense.

For several weeks the public has demanded an investigation of the Teheran affair. All sorts of accusations have been heard, especially about missionizing and about insensitivity to the religious feelings of the children....The decision of the Jewish Agency Executive to proceed with an investigation is something that should never have been put off as long as it was. But now the membership of the investigative committee has been made public, and it is difficult to believe what one's eyes read: The investigative committee is composed entirely of Jewish Agency people, members of its Executive and their assistants. In other words, members of that very institution which is responsible for whatever took place with the Teheran children enroute to Palestine. The absurdity of the matter is even more obvious if we compare the composition of this committee with, for example, that of the governmental investigative

committee on the issue of import permits. The government found it necessary to include members of the public on its committee. **The Jewish agency was afraid to do this.**

But this was not enough for the Agency. It made sure that most of the "investigators" would be people who have a share in what has happened to the Teheran children. Of the five committee members, at least three are directly linked to matters of aliyah and refugees. They were the people who sent the instructions to the officials whose activities are being investigated; perhaps they even appointed those officials. The responsibility for what took place is more or less theirs, whether directly or indirectly. And now they have been appointed to investigate their own actions!

The investigative committee of members in good standing has begun its activities by publishing an extraordinary "demand." It demands that all organizations and individuals refrain from any activity likely to "disturb it in the fulfillment of its task." Setting aside the personal respect due the authors of this "demand", a committee so comprised has no right to request public trust.

After the first materials were brought to the attention of the Agency's committee, it found it proper to postpone further discussion. **HaBoker** of March 21, 1943 reacted as follows:

And so the first postponement in the investigation of the scandal surrounding the Teheran children is a fact. The causes are "technical." The committee of interested parties, comprised of appointed and elected officials of the Jewish Agency who are themselves

responsible for the Teheran affair, has postponed the beginning of their "investigation." Why? Could it be that all the protests from all sides have taught it that it has no moral right to decide in this matter? Or are the "technical" causes of the sort so popular in this country -- to drag out the matter until it is forgotten....

In the meanwhile, a thank you letter from the children to HaShomerHaTzair was made public. The signatures of the children living in Kibbutz Ayanot were signed to a letter so sticky-sweet and so unnatural as to be unbelievable.

The artists of confusion were now at work:

On April 3rd, 1943, at a news conference, Moshe Shapiro, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, stated that the special committee, after studying the material, proposed to the Jewish Agency Executive that it place this investigation in the province of the court of the Zionist Congress. The Executive accepted the proposal and handed over the files to the Chairman of the Congress court.

Apparently, this was the means they chose for lulling public opinion. As if the court of the Congress were not agents of the Jewish Agency! But even this court was never convened. The material was so shocking that they avoided dealing with it. Nearly two months later, on May 19, 1943 **HaBoker** stated:

So I was wrong. Rabbi Y. L. Fishman did not meet with the press about the Teheran issue. The meeting was cancelled so suddenly that even in the Jewish Agency Building very few knew that it had been postponed and few of those knew why.

Matters are proceeding fine: the investigative

committee fell apart, the Congress court is not convening, and even the newsmen may not look behind the scenes.

On June 1, the committee of the Court of the Congress requested that the public bring it material on the subject of the behavior of the **madrichim** in Teheran. In other words, three and a half months after the children had arrived in Palestine, they began to gather the material for an investigation. The investigative committee refused to accept the children as witnesses, but did accept the **madrichim** -- the chief accused -- as witnesses. This committee was not authorized to reach a verdict. It would submit its conclusions to the Jewish Agency which would hand down the verdict. As of the beginning of the month of Av, half a year had passed from the day the children had arrived, and the Jewish Agency had not yet published its decision. In the meanwhile, totally unexpected testimony was made public. **HaBoker** of September 28, 1943 stated:

In a conversation with a leading Christian minister presently touring the Orient, the following information was divulged:

"When refugees began to flood across the Russian border into Persia, a number of church people were sent to deal with the physical and spiritual needs of the refugees. It became apparent that a large number of these refugees were starving and diseased Jews torn in body and in spirit who had barely made it alive to Persia in the hope of reaching their homeland, Palestine.

"The spiritual condition of the refugees was very convenient for missionary activity, and, had broad missionary activity been undertaken, there is no doubt that it would have been possible to win over many souls for Christianity. However, in the face of

the horrifying news about the situation of Jewry in Europe, the missionaries did not have the heart to convert the refugees. At about the same time, instructions were received from London not to undertake any missionary activities among the Jewish refugees, but solely to aid them in the material sense without attempting to influence them spiritually. These instructions were observed and are still being observed in full.

"It is noteworthy that the Jews and even their small children keep away as much as possible from Christian institutions. When the Jewish refugees in Persia had organized into a unit to some degree and the hundreds of children wandering around the country were gathered together and placed under the supervision of Jews, we received reports about a general anti-religious brainwashing aimed at the refugee Jews, primarily at the children who could still not distinguish between good and bad. This was led by young Jews who taught the little refugees to deny G-d. At first we took no interest in the matter, but very soon the Jews of Teheran began to speak openly about the activities of the young Jews who had upset the relationship of the children to G-d and had spread false beliefs among the Jewish refugees. Among the non-Jewish population, especially among young Persians, people began to speak about the activities of these people and they even requested that the Persian government take steps to stop these recently-arrived young Jews, who they said were communists.

"The activities of these youths were primarily centered on the refugee children. They also tried to infiltrate Jewish youth circles in Teheran, but were

Zionism. One thing must be clear: the Jews can only demand the Holy Land on the strength of the Bible and their historical past; these are the sole documents that attest to their absolute right to the Holy Land. But if the Jews themselves turn their backs on and trample underfoot the laws of the Torah that was given to them, how can they demand that other people accept the statements of that Torah? I am aware that this claim has often been used as a weapon by the enemies of Zionism, but I bring it up because of an honest wish to correct the religious situation in the new Jewish settlement. I have heard of a number of instances of questing for the Creator in those very kibbutzim in which atheism is their daily bread.

"What I have just said should be brought to the attention of the Jewish public so that they should not one day be surprised by the development of an anti-Zionist circle among the men of religion in England, a movement which will not have any political characteristic (it will not be pro-Arab) but will oppose endangering the religious situation throughout the Orient."

The **madrichim** who sinned against the souls and the bodies of the unfortunate children put into their hands by the Jewish Agency are living in peace in Palestine. Some of them, like Rudnitsky, make public appearances and give lectures. They are secure in the knowledge that behind them stands the Jewish Agency in whose spirit they trained the children.

unsuccessful. Some Persian Jewish circles in Teheran were shocked to hear that the children were forced to violate the Torah commandments, but they never took any action. A number of church people in Teheran looked into the children's situation and found out that there was indeed brainwashing against religion in general.

"When I arrived in Teheran, I wanted to get deeply involved and to see to it that the children would receive a religious Jewish education, because I know the bitter fate of European Jewry and it troubled me greatly to see these little refugees and victims of oppression falling victim to the deeds of conscienceless youths, but a few days later they set out for the Holy Land.

"From the travels of the children and their stops at different places, we received unfavorable reports about their education to atheism. I was very happy, upon arriving in the Holy Land, to hear that some of the children of this stiff-necked nation were firm in their faith, and that as soon as they no longer had to fear their youth leaders, they went back to praying to their G-d.

"I am aware that a number of chaplains who spent some time recently in the Holy Land prepared a report for church circles in London about the religious situation of the soldiers in the Middle East. They also wrote a report on the religious situation of the Jews in the Holy Land, and they are now preparing similar reports about the local Moslems and Christians. I must point out that this report will make a very bad impression on broad circles in the Anglican Church which until now supported

CHAPTER III

THE CHILDREN'S INTRODUCTION TO LIFE IN PALESTINE

The immigrants from Teheran, including the children, arrived in Palestine on February 18, 1943, and were immediately taken to the government camp in Atlit where they remained until Sunday the 16th. The lifestyle the children would first encounter upon arrival in Palestine would have great psychological importance. All that had transpired until their arrival in Palestine during their wanderings and in Teheran -- they regarded as one long but temporary horror. Many had grown accustomed and many had yielded to the lifestyle imposed by their Teheran **madrichim**, but very few accepted that way of life. Secretly, they hoped to regain the sanctified ways of their parents' homes. They identified Torah living with a life of peace and security. Kosher food and Sabbath observance were linked in their minds with bread and clothing. The faith that they would eventually have physical peace and peace of mind to observe wholesome Judaism in the Holy Land had strengthened them throughout the three years of their terrible wanderings. Palestine was engraved upon their souls by their parents and by the teachings in **cheider** as the land of sanctity and purity. Consequently, their first meeting with the reality of life in Palestine -- their first Sabbath -- would have a decisive effect on their future. This was clear to Agudath Israel, but it was just as clear to the officials of the Jewish Agency. **HaShomer HaTzair** of February 11, stated, "It is our wish specifically for educational reasons that the new immigrant children should see Palestine as it really is: the land under Hebrew secular construction." And, indeed, they acted in accord with this policy.

In Atlit there were dozens of **madrichim** and helpers, approximately fifty of whom had come from Teheran. Agudath

Israel was initially authorized to have two **madrichim** among all of these. Only after vigorous requests on the part of the Agudath Israel Executive was an additional **madrich** approved for a grand total of three.

This was indicative of the way the Jewish Agency would deal with this question in the future. At that time we were still naive, and we could not imagine that so disturbing an act of disagreement was part of a set policy of the Jewish Agency. Dozens of assorted newsmen, party leaders, Jewish Agency officials and others visited the camp in Atlit during those days. The Agudah leader Rabbi Moshe Blau, who wished to spend the Sabbath in Atlit, wrote in **Kol Yisrael** of February 25, 1943:

Someone suggested that I approach the Jewish Agency to receive an entry permit. He thought I would get one more quickly that way. He was wrong. The Jewish Agency kept on telling us, "Come back again tomorrow." So I went straight to the police who immediately telephoned Atlit that I had permission to enter.

Rabbi Eisenstadt, who spent the Sabbath in the camp in Atlit, also arrived there without the approval of the Jewish Agency, which was concerned about the impression that Jews who looked and dressed like Jews might make upon the children by arousing within them memories of what their fathers, grandfathers and uncles had looked like.

The behavior of the children in Atlit, before they were corrupted by the **madrichim** in the transit camps, testifies to the caliber and quality of these innocent Jewish children:

The first question many of the children asked were "Is it kosher here? Are we allowed to eat with our heads covered?" They asked their new **madrichim** to

recite prayers with them, to say Sh'ma with them, to say **kaddish** with them....

During our stay in Atilit, there were several quorums for public prayer every day. The phylacteries -- 110 pairs, sixty of which Agudath Israel had sent them in Teheran -- did not suffice, and the children took turns donning them. (Rabbi Kalman Kahane, Agudath Israel **madrich** in Atilit, in **HaDerech**, No. 24).

Rabbi Moshe Blau told of his first visit to the camp in Atilit in an article in **Kol Yisrael**, February 25, 1943:

The cook told me that at their first meal in Atilit, the children were informed that the food was kosher, and all the children sat down at one table with the religious children. Only one child, aged six or seven, remained standing on the side and did not approach the table. The cook went over to him and asked, "Why aren't you sitting down at your place to eat? The boy raised his eyes to her and pleaded, "Tell me, is it really kosher food without any problems?" ...

The praying was like at the closing prayer of Yom Kippur -- their sacred wails filled the shed and the adults present were drawn into this atmosphere....Some of them prayed by heart, and even some of the eight- and nine-year-olds were capable of praying by heart.

Later, without anyone suggesting it, they all pushed forward to kiss the Torah scroll. It was obvious that they had strong yearnings for the Torah, and that all their souls were parched for G-d's word....

And the moment of the HaGomel (thanksgiving) blessing! One of the children was called to the Torah

as Kohein and when he said the HaGomel blessing aloud, all the 120 boys joined him, loudly expressing thanks to G-d for all the good He had granted them.

(Rabbi Moshe Blau, **Kol Yisrael**, February 25, 1943).

Even though an explicit promise had been given by the Youth Aliyah office that the Sabbath would be observed in the camp in accordance with Jewish law everything was done to demonstrate to the children how the Sabbath was "normally" desecrated in Palestine: Jewish Agency **madrichim** smoked cigarettes, and Jewish Agency clerks drove to and from the camp in cars on the Sabbath. Clerical work for the children's departure on Sunday was done on the Sabbath so the children saw Jews writing on that day.

Rabbi Kalman Kahane testified that the handing out of clothing from the storeroom and the listing of all the children's articles was also made on the Sabbath by Jewish Agency officials before the children's very eyes.

Once these facts were made public, Moshe Shapiro, director of the Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency, found himself compelled to verify them, so he wrote to Mr. A. Dostrowski, director of Immigrant Houses in Haifa and a representative of the Jewish Agency Aliyah Department. Dostrowski replied:

"Regarding your request in your letter to us, I wish to provide the following explanation of the matter: The officials of the government Aliyah and Quarantine Department continued their work in Atilit with the Teheran immigrants on Saturday. I accompanied them out there Saturday morning. At some distance from the camp, we got out of the bus and walked into the camp. No one saw us while we were working. Not even Rabbi Blau saw us, so he did not see us smoking. What he did see was that I took

some six children in a red Magen David bus to a hospital. The government officials worked there all day. Many people came from all over the country to visit their relatives in the camp, but they were not allowed in and remained outside. If these people smoked, that was no one else's business. This is not the first time that we worked on Saturday. Whenever the government officials work, we work together with them. It cannot be said about us that we desecrate the Sabbath.

"A. Dostrowski."

Dostrowski verified the fact that he did indeed work and smoke on the Sabbath, except that he denies doing this in Rabbi Blau's presence. In his opinion, working on the Sabbath is not a desecration of its sanctity.

Desecration of the Sabbath was not enough. It was also necessary to teach the children something about the lack of modesty "customary" in the new settlement, in order that they should get to know the "land of secular construction" as it is and quickly grow accustomed to its habits:

One's heart bursts to see already in Atlit girls walking around with the same degree of immodesty as on the beach in Tel Aviv. (Rabbi Blau in the above article in **Kol Yisrael**.)

Rabbi Kalman Kahane testified:

In Atlit the usual arrangements obtained: on the right, barracks for the men, on the left, the barracks for the women. This time the Jewish Agency officials made a new arrangement. Not only did they allow the **madrichot** to sleep in one room with the boys -- even the older ones -- but a special barracks was set aside for **madrichim** and **madrichot** to sleep mixed.

The picture will be complete if we add one more typical fact

about which Rabbi Kahan testified:

Some of the children complained that their **madrichot** were refusing to give them meals as punishment for their participation in the Sabbath prayers!

This time, however, the **madrichot** did not accomplish their plan. They did not succeed in Atlit in keeping food from the orphans as they were in the habit of doing in Teheran. In Atlit the children had the opportunity to complain. They were not left to the "mercies" of the **madrichim**. Here the system of coercion came to an end. Its failure was obvious. Here a new system was instituted: systematic seduction and winning over of young hearts and minds. This system, which will be discussed later, was ultimately crowned with great success. Many were the children it ensnared.

CHAPTER IV

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE JEWISH AGENCY

When the first shocking reports arrived about the forcible removal of the children from their faith in the camps in Teheran, the Agudath Israel World Executive wrote the following letter to the Jewish Agency on December 28, 1942:

"Concerning the Teheran children, we have recently received reliable reports which state:

1. A large number of the children come from devout families, but their **madrichim** and teachers are irreligious people who are doing everything in their power to cause the children to "forget" the education they received in their parental homes.
2. For several months, the authorities there have not been concerned at all with providing kosher food and compel the children to eat nonkosher food.
3. The Orthodox rabbis there who attempted to communicate with the children were not allowed to do so.

"We believe that the Jewish Agency is responsible for these frightening facts which we regard as spiritual annihilation. We, therefore, ask you:

- a) Do you have any justification for your attitude to this problem in the past?
- b) Are you prepared to change this abnormal situation after consulting with us?

"It is impossible for us to wait on this subject because the children's blood screams to us from Teheran.

"Respectfully awaiting your reply,
"Yitzchok Meyer Lewin"

Since no reply was received to this letter, Rabbi Lewin

visited the Jewish Agency on January 7, 1943, and protested vehemently against the Teheran scandal. The Agency promised to investigate.

The regimen instituted in Teheran by the Jewish Agency representatives led to great concern for the future education of these children upon arrival in Palestine. In a private conversation Mrs. Henrietta Szold held with Mrs. Breuer (wife of Dr. Isaac Breuer, one of the leading Agudath Israel ideologists) and Dr. Falk Schlesinger of the Sharei Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, Mrs. Szold stated that since she personally admired and respected the sanctity of tradition, and since according to her conscience orphans should receive a religious education, her concern for the education of the Teheran children allowed her no rest and she understood well that Orthodoxy wished to protest and to act in time. The Agudath Israel Executive was not satisfied merely to protest, but immediately set about to prepare havens for the children.

The Polish Government, which had paid for and maintained the children's camps in Teheran, allowed £8 (Palestinian) per month for each child who was a Polish citizen. In a conversation with Polish Government officials, it was discovered that the Jewish Agency representative had agreed to forego £4 per month and thus reached an agreement under which the Polish Government would pay £4 per month toward the maintenance of each child, and the Jewish Agency would undertake the rest. This agreement was the basis for the Jewish Agency taking over responsibility for the refugee children.

Chief Rabbi Dr. Joseph H. Hertz of London requested of the Polish Government assurances for the religious education of the children. Minister Stanczek of the Polish Government in exile in London notified the Polish Consulate in Jerusalem that the supervision of the children's religious education should be placed in the hands of Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog. The

Consulate presented this request to the Jewish Agency. On October 14, 1942, the first meeting of Agudath Israel representatives Rabbis Sorotzkin, Lewin and Blau with Mrs. Szold took place. The Agudah representatives demanded that all the children receive religious educations and that at least 300 of them be placed in Agudath Israel schools. The pressure of public opinion stirred up by Agudath Israel compelled the Jewish Agency to drop its initial intention of placing all the children in atheistic educational institutions. Forced to act, it decided to attain its goal indirectly. The Jewish Agency announced a plan by which the children arriving in Palestine would be sent to temporary camps.

A circular published by the Youth Aliyah office, dated November 15, 1942, included the following information:

...A change in the regular procedures of Youth Aliyah has been made....The reports from Teheran indicate that there exists a group of fifty boys and girls who are linked together, who speak and write Hebrew--the best indication that they are educated individuals and, moreover, that they have a fundamental and common attitude toward life here. However, this Hebrew group with its Zionist consciousness is an exception. In our opinion, Youth Aliyah's experience during the war years obligated us to seek a fresh approach to the reception of the Teheran wanderers. In this spirit, we have decided to alter the tradition of Youth Aliyah. We have prepared and are presently preparing temporary reception stations, camps with roofed buildings. The young refugees will be set up there in groups organized according to age. Here they will receive a physical examination to determine whether they need any basic medical attention. A psychologist will also examine them to determine the children's

psychological condition. In addition, it will be necessary to examine the education they may have received in order to propose appropriate pedagogical direction regarding their placement in grade levels to be given those responsible for them in their permanent homes, whether in kibbutzim, schools, or at the homes of relatives. Ultimately, the camps will allow us to determine where the children should be placed permanently, particularly in the light of their religious needs and previous environment. Regarding the earlier Youth Aliyah children, it was possible to arrive at a decision on the last question, in most cases, with the help of the boys and girls themselves according to the system agreed upon by the Religious Commission abroad and in Palestine and by the Youth Aliyah Executive. This system is not applicable to the candidates from Teheran. We must approach this problem with all the means known to pedagogues and to men of religion. Needless to say, the temporary reception stations will be operated in accord with Jewish tradition, especially in regard to kosher food, and the observance of the Sabbath. In view of all that has been said in this paragraph, it seems to us that financial concerns should not prevent us from adding a new dimension to the traditional methods of Youth Aliyah.

The above circular had been sent abroad as propaganda to raise funds for Youth Aliyah and also to silence the tempest that arose in the Jewish world when the Jewish Agency plot was revealed. This tempest the circular labels "interest" and "advice". It is interesting that the circular admits that **only one group of fifty children had a Zionist education**, and it asserts that the religious education of the children from Teheran should

25 places, girls only with possibility of agricultural preparation.

12) Yeshiva Kol Torah dormitory in Jerusalem -- 30 places, boys only.

13) Yeshiva Tiferes Yisroel dormitory, Haifa -- 30 places, boys only.

"We are prepared to make all the arrangements required to prepare these places for receiving the immigrant children. As stated, we can if necessary, add to them.

"A list of **madrachim** and **madrivot** for the temporary camps will be sent to you at the beginning of next week."

On January 8, 1943, a meeting took place between the representatives of Agudath Israel and Mrs. Szold. At this time, they expressed their opposition to the setting up of transit camps shared by all sorts of educational ideologies, and they demanded camps in which there would be a religious atmosphere and in which only religious **madrachim** would educate Jewish children in the spirit of Judaism. Mrs. Szold emphasized that no institution had the right to mix into Youth Aliyah matters, and she pointed out that she had dealt with the arrangements for eight-thousand children who had come on **aliyah** from Germany, among them three-thousand from religious homes. The Agudat representatives asked where the three-thousand children had settled and what had happened to them religiously. The answer was that reality is very powerful, and there is no way to fight it. The Agudat representatives warned Mrs. Szold against a **kulturkampf** in the new settlement at this unfortunate time; that Orthodox Jewry in Palestine and throughout the world would stand firm to save the souls of these children for the Torah of their parents; and that, in addition to the absorption camps that Agudath Israel had prepared for 420

not be determined "by the boys and girls themselves." Later we will see to what degree Youth Aliyah remained faithful to the opinion expressed in this circular and to what degree the temporary camps operated according to Jewish tradition.

On January 7, 1943, the Agudath Israel World Executive sent the following letter to Youth Aliyah:

"Pursuant to the conversation between our representatives and Mrs. H. Szold, we hereby enclose a list of reception places for the youth arriving from Teheran. In addition to these places, we can propose 200 more places which we will list as required.

- 1) Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim, Gedera -- 30 boys.
- 2) Agudah Youth Kibbutz, K'far Saba -- 30 boys.
- 3) Two houses in Motza, next to which we have a 20-dunam stand of fruit trees and besides that 7 dunams for intensive agriculture -- 60 places as an independent institution.
- 4) The Ponevezh Yeshiva building in Zichron Meir with an attached barracks plus land to work -- 50 places as an independent institution.
- 5) Three houses in Magdiel with sufficient land for gardening -- 50 places as an independent institution.
- 6) A building in K'far Saba with 5 dunams of land for agriculture -- 20 places as an independent institution.
- 7) Chorev school dormitory, Jerusalem -- 30 places.
- 8) Yavneh school dormitory, Haifa -- 30 places, boys only.
- 9) Bais Yaakov school dormitory, Jerusalem -- 25 places, girls only.
- 10) Bais Yaakov school dormitory, Tel Aviv -- 25 places, girls only.
- 11) Bais Yaakov school dormitory, Petach Tikvah --

children, a transit camp in Zichron Meir had also been set up. They also presented a list of candidates for **madrichim** on behalf of Agudath Israel. Mrs. Szold promised to visit Zichron Meir and to do everything to fulfill the Agudah demands.

On January 10, 1943, the World Executive sent a letter to the Jewish Agency, again demanding that the children be given a religious education. The Agudah World Executive also sent on January 10th, a letter to Youth Aliyah, enclosing a list of fourteen **madrichim** for the transit camps and requesting that the recommended **madrichim** be sent questionnaires.

Mrs. Szold responded on January 12, 1943 to the Agudah's letter of January 7th enumerating reception places they could provide for the children. She stated that permanent absorption places would be decided only after the children had arrived in Palestine.

The Agudah World Executive sent a second list of six **madrichim** and seven **madrichot** to Youth Aliyah on January 28, 1943 requesting that the individuals be sent questionnaires. They also asked to be consulted after the questionnaires had been completed.

In a conversation that Rabbi Y. M. Lewin and Rabbi Moshe Blau had on January 29th with Yitzhak Greenbaum, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, Greenbaum told them that according to the information he possessed **the children were for the most part nonreligious**. He also reported a conversation that he had had with Minister Kut on this subject. He said he had told Minister Kut that the Jewish Agency would forego entirely the budget supplied by the Polish Government for the children if the Government continued to demand religious education for the children. At the end of the conversation, Greenbaum promised to give the children of religious parents to Agudath Israel.

In the course of about a month, Mrs. Szold could not find a

spare moment to meet with the Agudah representatives and kept postponing her appointment with them from day to day. Without knowing the Agudah candidates, Youth Aliyah chose several names from the list that Agudah had presented and questionnaires were sent only to those few.

In a letter to Mrs. Szold dated January 29, 1943, the World Executive requested that questionnaires be sent to all the **madrichim** they had suggested to the Agency. They again asked that the Agency visit the camp in Zichron Meir with them so that it could be prepared for the children. They also reiterated their demand for completely religious camps separate from nonreligious elements, run by only religious people.

Ultimately, the Agudah representatives were invited to a meeting with Mrs. Szold on February 3rd. She again claimed that she had the good will to fulfill all the Agudah demands. The Agudah representatives repeatedly emphasized their minimal demands to receive for the children a portion equivalent to the 60,000 Polish Jewish families who were members of Agudath Israel.

On February 6, 1943, a consultation took place on the subject of the Teheran children. Present were Chief Rabbi Herzog; Agudah representatives Rabbi Y. M. Lewin, Dr. Breuer and Rabbi Eisenstadt; Mirzachi representatives Rabbis Neufeld, Farbstein and D. Wolfsberg; Jewish Agency representatives Mrs. Szold, Dr. George Landauer, Kaplan, Shapiro, Rabbi Fishman and Greenbaum. The firm statements of Rabbi Herzog and the Agudah representatives made a deep impression.

A letter from the Jewish Agency to the Agudath Israel World Executive dated February 9th, 1943:

"I have the honor of informing you that the Jewish Agency Executive, in its session of February 7th, 1943 dealt with the request of the delegation led by the Chief Rabbi on the subject of educating the children

presently on their way from Teheran to Palestine and decided:

"a) The form of education that the children will receive will be in accord with the lifestyle customary in their parents' homes. In dubious cases, as determined by Mrs. Szold, the children will be placed in religious educational institutions.

"b) Children aged 14 and over will choose their educational system for themselves.

"c) The Executive affirms that the responsibility for arranging and supervising the institutions in which the children will be placed is to remain in the hands of Youth Aliyah and there is to be no change in the traditions of this office regarding the basic nationalistic education of the children.

"Very respectfully,
"Y. Greenbaum"

The World Executive replied on February 15, 1943:

"We respectfully inform you that the World Executive of Agudath Israel in its session of February 14th dealt with your letter and decided to request the following clarifications from you without affecting the principle expressed by Chief Rabbi Herzog that all the children, without exception, are to receive a religious education.

a) Regarding paragraph 'a' of your letter... the question arises, how is this to be clarified? We must add that it is possible to state with absolute certainty that the majority of Polish Jewry was religious and that an absolute majority of religious Jewry was organized within Agudath Israel.

b) Regarding paragraph 'b'... we must emphasize that these children have been wandering for three years in

Russia alone, homeless and without education, suffering incessantly, and are psychologically incapable of determining for themselves what form their education should take.

c) Regarding paragraph 'c' ... we ask you to clarify for us what you mean by the following terms: 'arrangements for the children', 'supervision of institutions,' and 'nationalistic education'."

The Jewish Agency replied on February 23, 1943:

"We received your letter of the tenth of this month and we comment:

1) Mrs. Szold, together with the committee that will assist her, will determine after clarifications with the children the lifestyle they obtained in the homes of their parents.

2) It is our opinion that children aged 14 and over are capable of choosing their lifestyles themselves. Your comment is not intended to clarify a decision but to argue against a decision.

3) Our paragraph 'c' means that Jewish children coming to this land will be trained to be good citizens of the motherland, will prepare themselves for a productive life, and will actively participate in the building up of the land.

"Very respectfully,
"Y. Greenbaum"

Attempting to reach agreement and to avoid open war, the Agudath Israel World Executive settled for an absolutely minimal demand and wrote to the Jewish Agency on March 1, 1943 demanding that an Agudah representative participate on the committee determining the division of the children according to their places of absorption. This was based on the fact that most of the children were from a religious background.

On February 12, 1943, the World Executive sent Youth Aliyah an additional list of 200 absorption places for immigrant children from Teheran.

"Absorption places and dormitories for boys only:

- a) Yeshiva Sfas Emes, Jerusalem -- 25.
- b) Yeshiva Petach Tikva -- 25.
- c) Yeshiva Tifereth Zion, Bnei Brak -- 15.
- d) Yavneh School, Jerusalem -- 25.
- e) Religious School, K'far Ata -- 20.
- f) Yeshiva K'far Ganim -- 20.
- g) Religious School, Raanana -- 20.
- h) Religious School, Hertzliyah -- 25.
- i) Religious School, Tzfas -- 25.

They added:

"We are prepared to accept upon ourselves the setting up of these places and preparing them to receive the immigrant children."

The two lists of absorption places included 635 places in cities and in villages for Torah study, for crafts, for agriculture and for secular studies. In other words, they satisfied all requirements. Nevertheless, it became clear in a conversation with Mrs. Szold on February 15, 1943 that, of eleven transit camps that had been approved, there was not one Agudath Israel camp. Mrs. Szold said that illness had kept her from visiting the camp in Zichron Meir and that was why she had never been able to approve it as a transit camp (as if it were impossible to send someone else in her place to visit Zichron Meir). Similarly, it became clear that only five **madrachim** from among the candidates Agudath Israel had proposed had been approved, in contrast to nearly one hundred other **madrachim**, not including nursery workers. The excuse: only these five **madrachim** had received questionnaires because the office had

'run out of forms'. Since Youth Aliyah had not received the information about their qualifications, they could not approve them. For the camp in Atlit, they approved only two Agudah **madrachim**. The reason: the children would only be at Atlit for three days, so there was no great value attached to the work of the **madrachim** in such short time. The Agudah representative protested vehemently, but all he could attain was the appointment of a third **madrach** for Atlit and the promise by Y. Greenbaum to approve one Agudah **madrach** for each transit camp.

In a meeting between Rabbi Y. M. Lewin and David Ben-Gurion on February 23, 1943, they discussed the subject of the Teheran children and the unfair attitude of the Jewish Agency toward Agudath Israel. Rabbi Lewin cautioned against a civil war at this time and expressed his great fear of the possibility that children who had retained their Judaism abroad might, G-d forbid, be brought to spiritual conversion in the Holy Land itself.

Two weeks passed, and none of the promises was kept. In the meanwhile, terrible reports came out about the situation in the transit camps. The storm of religious public opinion forced the Mizrachi to send a letter together with Agudath Israel to Mrs. Szold on March 1:

"Unfortunately, we are compelled to point out to you that the information you are receiving from your **madrachim** and **madrichot** about the religious composition of the refugee children is incorrect. You told us, based on the reports you had received, that the children who had come from Teheran never saw a synagogue and that not one of them knew how to recite the blessing of the Torah. When we met the children in assorted camps and in the Yeshurun Synagogue, we came to the conclusion that 90% of

the children are from Orthodox homes and know how to pray very well. Many of them speak good Hebrew.

"In view of the above, we cannot agree under any circumstances that the children should receive a liberal education directly opposed to the position taken by the parents of these children.

"We have no right, in assuming responsibility for these children, to direct their education as the nonreligious among us see fit. We demand unequivocally that the vast majority of the **madrachim** by people who fear G-d and know how to direct the children in the path of age-old Jewry.

"We know well your position concerning religion, and we are prepared to help you in this direction.

"In the name of the Mizrahi Federation:

"Y. C. Farbstein

"In the name of Agudath Israel:

"Y. M. Lewin"

When the religious **madrachim** in Jerusalem complained to the Youth Aliyah office about the interest shown by the Orthodox public concerning the children, Youth Aliyah decided to transfer the children from Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem to Nahalal. The Agudah found out about this plot in time, and a storm of indignation arose. A large delegation of rabbis visited Mrs. Szold and declared that the public would not allow the plot to be realized. In a letter to Mrs. Szold, dated March 1, 1943, the World Executive protested the proposed transfer of the children. They also demanded that at least one Agudah **madrach** be added to the staff of each camp.

The children were not transferred to Nahalal. It is uncertain whether Youth Aliyah changed its mind because of the Agudath Israel protests or because of the difficulty of making arrangements for so large a group of children in Nahalal. The

approval of additional Agudath Israel **madrachim** was put off by the Youth Aliyah officials from day to day with all kinds of excuses.

The process of weaning the children away from their faith in the transit camps grew stronger daily. Every day new spiritual victims fell among the children. On March 5th, 1943, an Agudah representative met with Mrs. Szold and that same day sent her the following letter concerning the situation in the camps:

"The **madrachim** smoke on the Sabbath and put on and turn off electric lights, etc. before the children. The children are taken to visit free-thinking kibbutzim in which the food is not kosher. Sabbath desecration takes place within the camps by the youth institutions nearest to the camps. Visits are arranged for the children on the Sabbath day to kibbutzim in which the Sabbath is greatly desecrated. For example, we were told that the children of the Beit HaChalutzot camp in Petach Tikva will spend their entire second Sabbath in Givat HaSh'losha.

"You know that we are extremely concerned for the children's faith, especially since it has become clear that 80% to 90% are Orthodox children, children who themselves keep the Torah and its laws.... One of the **madrachim** declared expressly to us that he has clear instructions that the camp is not to have a religious character and that the **madrachim** are to continue with all their regular life habits as regards the Sabbath and religion without any consideration of the fact that they are in charge of children who observe the Torah.

"This situation requires us to demand from you in

the most radical manner the following minimal changes:

- a) To arrange that every camp have at least one **madrich** or **madricha** from Agudath Israel from among the candidates we proposed, and we are willing to propose more should we be asked to do so.
- b) Let clear instructions be given to all the **madrichim**, even the nonreligious, that they are to refrain at all costs from any action contrary to Jewish faith, such as smoking and putting on lights on the Sabbath, etc.
- c) Not to allow visits to nonreligious kibbutzim and certainly not on the Sabbath.
- d) That the courses taught to the children in Bible and on any other subject related to religion are to be taught by a religious **madrich** or **madricha**. If that is impossible, let those subjects not be taught in these camps at all.
- e) To assure us that the examination of the children regarding their placement for permanent education will be made in the presence of appropriate representation on our part.
- f) "We very strongly request that you assure us with a positive reply immediately to all the above so that we can quiet the tempest of the Orthodox public and so that we can wait with some degree of peace of mind for the proper disposition of the matter.

Suddenly, the Jewish Agency officials broke all their promises and informed us that they could not approve more than two additional **madrichim** for Agudath Israel: one named Rosenberg for the camp in Beit Tzeirot Mizrachi in Jerusalem and Mrs. Wein for the camp in Chadera. Even those two **madrichim** were not allowed entry to the camps by the staff of

either camp. The Jewish Agency officials were presumably helpless in the face of the opposition of the **madrichim** to fulfilling the instructions of the Youth Aliyah office. Madrich Rosenberg was not allowed into the camp at all, and Mrs. Wein was permitted only to work in the camp kitchen: she was not recognized as a **madricha**, she was not given a group, and she was not allowed to participate in the meetings of the **madrichim** staff.

Even though Mrs. Szold promised to give Agudath Israel 200 to 250 children, her statement to the press that the religious had no more than 350 absorption places and those almost all within the framework of HaPoel HaMizrachi gave rise to the suspicion that she would be breaking more promises. On March 8, 1943, the World Executive wrote to Mrs. Szold:

"1) In the press of Friday, March 2, it was stated that Agudath Israel had agreed that children aged 14 and over would select their own educational form. We emphasize that in our letter of February 23rd of this year, in paragraph 2, we clearly expressed our opinion opposing this assumption and gave appropriate reasons.

"2) In HaAretz of the above date, it was stated that 350 religious absorption places had been prepared, most of them in Mizrachi circles. This seems to indicate that you are ignoring the absorption places proposed by Agudath Israel, for we alone proposed to you more than 500 absorption places! How is it possible that there should be only 350 absorption places, most of them in Mizrachi circles?

"3) We ask you to provide permission for the Agudath Israel Executive to visit every camp."

On February 17, 1943, the World Executive wrote to the Youth Aliyah office:

"We are still waiting for an answer to all of our many requests.

"We wish to point out that the camps are slowly being broken up and that our demand for at least one Agudath Israel *madrich* in each group has not been fulfilled. Moreover, even the two additional *madrichim* approved for us were not allowed to go to their jobs, and they are being fobbed off with a variety of excuses.

"We wish to establish these facts as evidence of your attitude to our requests, an attitude that does not at all concur with your promises to us all along on this matter."

Despite its lack of response to Agudath Israel's demands, the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem sent a telegram to its representative in London, Berl Locker, on the first of April, 1945 (as reported by Harry Goodman, the Agudath Israel representative in London in a cable):

"Berl Locker received a telegram from Jerusalem about the Teheran children that negotiations about the Agudah's share are progressing and there is hope for satisfactory results. On our part we are prepared to aid educational development and opportunities in accord with our agricultural policy, leaving religious education to them precisely as we have aided the Agudah beyond a doubt in K'far Saba, Chofetz Chayim and Chorev."

"Goodman, Agudah"

The telegram to Locker was sent solely to private Youth Aliyah contributors in England to quiet the tempest among the Jewish public there.

In a conversation between the Agudah representatives and Mrs. Szold, she again promised to approve the Bais Yaakov dormitories as absorption places.

Trip to the Kibbutzim

At the last moment, before the camps were broken up, the children were taken on a trip to visit the kibbutzim in the Jezreel valley. The children, accustomed for many years to hunger and deprivation, returned from the trip greatly influenced by the bounty and beauty they had seen in the valley. In this frame of mind, they were ready to answer the questions of the Agency officials "appropriately". Regarding this, the World Executive wrote to the Jewish Agency on April 5, 1943, again pointing out that all the children, including those over 14 years of age, were psychologically incapable of choosing the form of their education due to the trauma of the previous three years. They also charged that the children had been brainwashed by the secular camp *madrichim*, who had isolated them from religious influence. Some of the children whose parents were religious were instructed to say that their parents were irreligious and even anti-religious. The World Executive further charged that the children had been coached in their requests for education, with a strong bias against Agudath Israel.

Without informing Agudath Israel, the Jewish Agency began querying the children and transferring them to permanent absorption camps. Despite the decision not to ask children under the age of 14, the little ones were also asked where they wanted to go. Mrs. Szold stated that she would give Agudath Israel seventy children and no more, and that she approved as absorption places the kibbutzim in Kfar Saba and Gedera and the Chorev School alone. On April 7th, Lewin wrote to Mrs. Szold on behalf of the World Executive:

"Regarding my conversation with you yesterday: you may imagine that this conversation disturbed my peace of mind and upset me terribly. I therefore find

it necessary to write you as follows: true, you asked me not to tell anyone until next Monday, but you understand that it is a great and heavy responsibility for me to wait until after the children have been distributed and in the meanwhile the division of the children to their absorption places is taking place without us as if Agudath Israel did not exist. **It is against this that I express my bitterness and my firmest protest.**

"In the course of my conversation with you, I was so upset that I could not find the appropriate words to reply immediately. I would like to touch on a few points:

1) After three months of prolonged and wearying negotiations, of countless conversations and meetings, of countless appeals to your conscience not to broaden the abyss that separates us at a time of such great trouble for Jewry and to heed the requests of Orthodox Jewry, we receive a reply that we will be given children for only three absorption places: Kfar Saba, Gedera and Chorev. This decision shocked me. I demanded explanations, but I must assert that I have not heard a single reason to justify this injustice.

2) I assert that throughout this time we were preparing absorption places, and we provided you a list of places for 535 children. In a meeting with you in the presence of the undersigned, Dr. Breuer and Mr. Beit, it was agreed that Bais Yaakov dormitories would be recognized as absorption places. You even added that you would like to know who is in charge of the dormitory of the Bais Yaakov school in Jerusalem. You and Mr. Beit also asked us to provide a list of expenses for the absorption places we had

Here I.M.LEWIN reveals to the Zionists that it is really money he is seeking from them for the absorption places and their upkeep for those children, he says rightfully belong to the Agudah. Also that the Zionists agreed to pay and even had asked for the bills. They

prepared, as well as how much money we had spent, and how much was still lacking for completion so that you could provide it. At that point Mr. Beit mentioned that the budget for maintaining absorption centers in Jerusalem was greater than in a smaller city. There was no doubt regarding our other places of absorption in dormitories and in schools in Jerusalem and in the other settlements.

"We operated in the dark all along. We did not know which absorption places to prepare first. You demanded that Hebrew be the language in these absorption places, and we agreed. You demanded more Eretz Yisraelism in the curricula, and we agreed. You demanded agriculture and trade, and we agreed. We were ready to meet every demand. In the meanwhile, we invested vast sums in setting up our absorption places, spending more than £3,000 -- and then all at once we are told that you recognize only Kfar Saba, Gedera and Chorev with the excuse that these have served before as absorption places for Agudath Israel; and then another excuse is given that you were not well and could not visit the absorption places. Are these reasons for such injustice? Is there any purpose in arguing with such a reason which is totally inadequate for the injustice done to us!

3) As you yourself have declared, most of the children you examined attended Bais Yaakov schools in Poland. Some of them said that they used to don t'filin and now they don't. And some of them said Bais Yaakov yes, Agudath Israel no. Doesn't that demonstrate clearly enough that all this is the result of constant propaganda against Judaism and against Agudath Israel? And we ask, how is it possible to

were also supposedly willing to pay for the higher price for Jerusalem. Lewin complains how terrible the Zionists refuse to keep their promises. He even agreed to all Zionist demands, "Hebrew to be the language" the language of national revival, "more Eretz

pass calmly over the results of such an inquiry and to state that none of these children has any link to Agudath Israel and that of all the Teheran children -- about whom it has been demonstrated that almost all of them are Polish children and the children of religious parents -- that only some eighty should be given over to Agudath Israel!

4) We declare that the asking of the children is valueless after the long process of weaning the children away from religion and the propaganda against Agudath Israel that began in Teheran and continued through the transit camps up to and including the trip through the Valley which was obvious propaganda to get the children to settle in irreligious' kibbutzim. Such a poll cannot be a determining factor for children aged 14 and over, and it certainly is absurd for children below the age of 14, whom you originally decided not to poll. You even informed us that you had decided not to poll them. "Once it is demonstrated that the children are from religious homes, no one will deny that Agudath Israel represented the lion's share of religious Jewry in Poland. Consequently, this injustice is a scandal about which we cannot keep quiet. There is no greater scandal than robbing children from their parents' faith, parents who wanted their children to be educated in the spirit of Torah-true Judaism.

5) You promised us countless times and this week, too, that Agudath Israel would be a partner in the division of the children to their absorption places. You told us this expressly all the time, and even yesterday you said that you want to meet with me about this. So what happened suddenly that the children are being divided up without our knowledge?

Yisraelism in the curricula" meaning more nationalism, less Torah, and "agriculture".

Are you making fun of us? After our conversation, you telephoned me that you had sent a representative to Mikveh Yisroel. So why are children in the transit camps in Jerusalem already being sent to their absorption places without our knowledge?

6) These facts prove to what degree you are provoking us, to what degree you are playing on our nerves. I cannot tell you what our members, who will surely be shocked by this injustice, will think of all this; but as I know them, this situation will lead them to the decision to forego entirely accepting any children from you.

7) I only wish to emphasize that over the past three months of negotiations we have invested much physical and mental effort and great financial strain to arrange and prepare our absorption places. You can imagine, therefore, how much bitterness your decision will engender among us, even though I hope that at the last moment you will sober up and change the situation in decent fashion. In any event, our conscience is clear.

8) I have emphasized to you a number of times that we believe that the only way to salvage the Yishuv and the Jewish people is to establish ourselves on the basis of the Jewish faith, which was the source of life for the Jewish nation throughout the generations. If now some thousand children were saved from the Nazi hell, they must be handed over for a religious education. But if the opposite should take place and the children are taken away from their faith to be given over for nonreligious education against the will of their parents, that is a scandal that will reach to heaven.

"We ask you to reach an agreement with principles, the Agudah and orthodox Judaism had stood for, sat, staged the battle for the

Orthodox Jewry as represented by Agudath Israel, for at such a time of trouble we do not wish to broaden the differences that separate us. The undersigned pointed out time and again in letters to the Jewish Agency that now is not the time to increase divisiveness between the segments of the Yishuv. If your wish is to strike at Agudath Israel, it is clear to us that Agudath Israel will come out of it stronger than ever. We are no longer responsible, and we no longer care to go into detail as to the far-reaching results this will bring. I requested, I begged, I warned countless times. The responsibility is yours. It is not a matter of negotiations with this individual or another. It is an injustice toward an entire movement in Jewry which represents a large and important segment of Jewry, that portion which is still loyal to the G-d of the Jews and the Torah of the Jews. If the situation does not change at the last moment, we will know how to act."

To the Jewish Agency the Agudah World Executive sent another letter, dated April 8, 1943, expressing its anger at the injustice done to the children by allowing them to receive an irreligious education. They were concerned not only about the Teheran children, but also about the 30,000 immigrant children yet to come to the Holy Land. "We shall be compelled against our will," they stated,

"to apply to the government to keep the present arrangement from setting a precedent for the children yet to come.

"We would have preferred to avoid this, but your insolent, shameful attitude toward us forces us to it. No nation would have permitted itself such an attitude to religious people as the one you have shown

and "every demand" saw no real difference between the Zionists and the Mizrahi and between the Agudah. Therefore ipso facto saw no need to give Agudah children and pay for them as well; let alone a higher price.

to the part of Jewry that has remained loyal to Judaism as your own parents understood it throughout the generations.

"We call upon you, therefore, at the last minute to remedy this injustice."

In answer to both the above letters, the following reply, dated April 12, was received together with the information that Agudath Israel would receive thirty-two children!

"At a session of the Committee for Youth Aliyah of the Jewish Agency, which met yesterday, it was decided:

"Youth Aliyah will use the following places:

- 1) The Chorev school for boys and girls in Jerusalem;
- 2) The farm at Kfar Saba;
- 3) The Chafetz Chaim farm in Gedera.

"In addition, it will examine the places you have in Magdiel and Zichron Meir immediately and, if they meet the requirements of Youth Aliyah, it will use them, too.

"We are currently concluding the polling of the children from all the camps from a religious point of view and are making every effort to break up the camps before Pesach. We will be in touch with you about the transfer of the children who belong to Agudah to your institutions.

"Please acknowledge receipt of this letter and its contents.

"Respectfully,
"H. Szold"

So ended the three months of negotiations of Agudath Israel with the Jewish Agency, which were undertaken in good faith

and with an honest desire to prevent fighting and to reach an agreement. For three months, Agudath Israel was misled with false promises that no one ever intended to keep. Decisions were changed deliberately dozens of times. This was not negotiation, but the callous and shameful degradation of Agudath Israel. Leaders of the Jewish Agency, men who claimed to be leaders of the Jewish people, shamelessly broke their public promises. Agudath Israel trusted Mrs. Henrietta Szold's integrity. It was difficult to imagine that this woman, with so great a reputation, with decades of social work behind her, would not keep her word. The sad truth came out that Youth Aliyah is run by officials who receive their instructions from their party centrals. HaBoker of June 2, stated in an editorial entitled, "The Teheran Children and the Jewish Agency":

It is clear as well that the Jewish Agency is not trying to justify the sad presentation it made before the Yishuv and the rest of the world when it began caring for the refugee children. It now claims that all the dealings are in the hands of the institution named Youth Aliyah, headed by Mrs. Szold.

We do not think that the Jewish Agency should be proud of this answer.

We find it necessary to express our opposition to the attempt to hide in this matter behind Mrs. Szold's skirts.

The scandal here was so obvious that it opened the eyes of many people in Palestine and abroad. Youth Aliyah lost forever the trust that the public had placed in it. The affair of the Teheran children was its great failure, and it no longer has the right to take responsibility for Jewish children.

The objective reader studying the exchange of letters that describe the development of the negotiations between Agudath

Israel and the Jewish Agency will see how far Agudath Israel went to avoid any political vaunting, even at times at the cost of its own self-respect -- all out of responsibility toward the terrible times and toward the refugee children. Agudath Israel did not ignore a single leader of the Jewish Agency; it met with every one of them about the Teheran children. All of them gave generous promises which were not fulfilled. In order not to burden the reader, we did not provide reports of all the frequent conversations, especially those in the last period. Here is a brief list of broken promises and incorrect statements made by the Jewish Agency:

- 1) Before the children came to Palestine, they announced that only fourteen children were religious. After the children arrived, they were compelled to admit that 80% to 90% of the children were to be considered religious.
- 2) A transit camp was promised to Agudath Israel but was not given.
- 3) They promised at least one Agudath Israel *madrish* for every camp and, in the end, authorized only five *madrishim* for eleven camps.
- 4) In the first circular, they established that the Teheran children were incapable of determining their own educational futures, and then they decided that children aged 14 and over could be regarded as fit to make such decisions.
- 5) They stated in letters and in the press that children below the age of 14 would be divided according to their parental background and not in accord with their own wishes. In the end, they took a poll of the smaller children and even six-year-olds were found capable of determining their futures.
- 6) Originally they promised to give Agudath Israel 200 to 250 children. They then dropped that number to eighty and ultimately gave them only thirty children.

7) Despite the fact that they never visited Agudah's absorption places and consequently could not evaluate them, they announced at a press conference that only 350 religious absorption places had been prepared and that the vast majority of them belonged to Hapoel HaMizrachi.

8) They promised to give the Bais Yaakov students to Agudath Israel. In the end, they did not give even one Bais Yaakov student to the Agudah.

This shameful behavior of the Jewish Agency leadership toward the Orthodox public represented by Agudath Israel was complemented by the seductive and forcible efforts of the various *madrichim* in the transit camps to win over the children to remove them from their faith.

CHAPTER V

THE MIZRACHI

The Jewish Agency plot could not have been carried out were it not for the two-faced stand taken by the Mizrachi. Through all the stages of the Teheran children scandal, had the Jewish Agency been confronted by a united Orthodox Jewry or, more correctly, had there not existed a party that claimed to speak in the name of the Torah, upon whose blind loyalty the Jewish Agency could rely to cover up for all its activities, Youth Aliyah would not have dared challenge public opinion in the Holy Land and abroad, and would have been compelled to yield to its demands. Agudath Israel immediately realized the danger ahead in its battle for religious education for all the children should the Jewish Agency be aided by a party calling itself religious. Due to the urgency of the situation, Agudath Israel concluded that this time it would be necessary to forget its differences with the Mizrachi in religious and educational perspectives and to join together in the battle with a unified program. Below it will be clarified how the efforts at unity were frustrated and what role Mizrachi played throughout the affair.

Ignoring the Facts

In HaDerech of October 22, 1942 there appeared an editorial signed Moshe Shonfeld, the first article to arouse the public to awareness of the spiritual fate of the children, who were about to be brought from Teheran to the Holy Land. From that time on, the issue was never dropped by the Agudah journals HaDerech and Kol Yisroel.

On November 22, 1942 Agudath Israel convened a public meeting in Tel Aviv dedicated to the shocking revelation of the systematic slaughter of the Jews in Europe and also to the issue of the Teheran children. The Mizrachi newspaper HaTzofeh left out of its report of the resolutions publicized at that meeting all the demands for religious education for the Teheran children. A second meeting on this subject took place on Rosh Chodesh Teveth in Tel Aviv. The Mizrachi continued its silence as did its organ, HaTzofeh, despite the fact that in an article entitled "Again on the Same Topic," published in HaDerech of October 29, 1942, Moshe Shonfeld criticized Mizrachi's silence:

Apparently it has been appraised as usual by the promise of some percentage of the children which will be given over to its supervision, and that will be enough to placate it.

Only after Agudath Israel began to negotiate with the Mizrachi through Rabbi Isaac Herzog about unified action on the Teheran children did Rabbi M. Berlin publish an article about the children in HaTzofeh of December 15, 1942. The leaders of the Mizrachi did not react. They kept quiet and withheld the reports they received until the Agudah publications published the details that had reached the Agudah office about the forcible removal of the children from their faith in the children's camp in Teheran. In a speech at a *moshav* of Hapoel HaMizrachi on July 13, Moshe Shapiro said (HaTzofeh, July 16, 1943):

"Throughout all this time, we have not received any complaints about the religious situation in the children's camps from the refugee rabbis who stopped in Teheran. On the 18th of December, the weekly **HaDerech** published a letter from a rabbi about coercion used against the religious children in the camps. I immediately sent with a special messenger, who left that day for Teheran, a letter to the director of the camp, in which I requested clarification. On the second day of January, the children left the place on their way to the Holy Land. In the meantime, I received a reply that there is not an iota of truth in the reports. Besides, I was told, the supervisor of the camp, Rabbi Dr. Hershberg, had left for Palestine and would report on the matter. At the same time, letters arrived from refugee rabbis in Teheran and they did not mention the religious issue.

To this Mr. Werfel replied at the same session (**BaMishor** of July 22):

Rabbi M. Hager of Sosnowiec, a veteran Mizrachi member, during his stay in Teheran did not give the Mizrachi establishment any peace at all with his shocking reports about the religious situation in the children's camp there. This much is clear: At that point we were already not acting with integrity. It was the responsibility of our representatives in the Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency to be much more interested in the true situation and not to be satisfied with incidental and partial reports.

Negotiations with Mizrachi

As mentioned, Rabbi Herzog acted as a go-between in the negotiations between Agudath Israel and the Mizrachi. Seven meetings took place on this matter at which representatives of Mizrachi turned down all the Agudah proposals seeking to

agree on joint participation and to determine how the children would be divided. Since Youth Aliyah maintained a religious commission -- which was comprised solely of Mizrachi people with no Agudath Israel representatives -- it would simply give over the religious children to this commission. Thus, any joint effort would strengthen the Mizrachi position and place all the religious children in Mizrachi hands. Since Agudath Israel did not support Mizrachi education, it could not agree to an arrangement under which Agudath Israel would arouse public opinion against the Youth Aliyah plot while the Mizrachi would actually receive the prize because of its moderate silence.

Agudah made several proposals to the Mizrachi. Its first proposal was to divide the religious children 50-50 between Agudath Israel and Mizrachi. In the first chapter we demonstrated statistically that the Mizrachi educational network in Poland had 7% of the total number of religious students and only 14% relative to the official Agudah network. Agudath Israel viewed this proposal as a great concession, yet Mizrachi rejected it. Agudath Israel's second proposal was to leave the determination of the division of the children in the hands of three rabbis: Rabbi Kahaneman of Ponievezh Yeshiva on behalf of Agudath Israel, Rabbi Herzog on behalf of Mizrachi, and a third rabbi to be chosen by the first two. This proposal, too, was rejected by the Mizrachi. Agudath Israel made a further concession and proposed a committee of three rabbis: one to be chosen by Agudath Israel, one to be chosen by the Mizrachi, and Rabbi Herzog as the third member. This proposal, as well, was rejected by the Mizrachi. The rejection of all three proposals showed clearly what the Mizrachi intentions were concerning division of the children.

In **HaTzofeh** of march 29, 1943, Rabbi A. Neufeld explained why the Mizrachi rejected these proposals:

True, we did not agree to the two Agudah

proposals. We could not agree to them. Agudah's first proposal would have meant ignoring and denying Mizrachi's work in this land throughout a period of several decades. How could we pass so brutally over years so full of action, suffering, labor, investments of gigantic financial means, sweat, sacrifice and unlimited pioneering; the making of major, glorious creations which bring glory to Orthodox Jewry; the establishment of institutions and settlements; the creation of a whole movement of religious agricultural settlements; the formation of the religious labor movement; educational construction in the cities and in the villages -- and all this accomplished through infinite sacrifice throughout the entire period, when Mizrachi and its youth movement and its labor movement stood alone in all this gigantic labor?...

The second proposal to leave the decision to a committee of rabbis was also inappropriate. Is this a matter that needs halachic clarification?

He expressed himself similarly at a meeting of the Mizrachi Executive reported in **HaTzofeh** of May 19, 1943:

The first condition they demanded was to give them 50% of the religious children. Naturally the Mizrachi could not consent to this, to nullify itself and to turn to naught its forty years of work in building a land.

In other words, the Mizrachi rejected the Agudah proposal to divide the children with the exact same excuse used by the irreligious vis-a-vis religious Jewry. Their meaning was that the children were not to be divided according to their origins, according to the will of their parents, but according to the

political power structure within the agricultural settlement-of-the Holy Land.

The Mizrachi boast about its "forty years of work" is a false boast. Here is what Mr. A. Simon, an early Youth Aliyah activist and member of Mizrachi, wrote in **HaAretz** of July 5, 1943 in his article "Zionist Educational System in the Light of the Teheran Children Issue":

It would seem that the labor movement in the Holy Land is, for the most part, free to act as it wishes. Thus, when Youth Aliyah was founded in 1932, the members of the Histadrut (Palestine's only labor union) could immediately speak about absorbing 1,000 children whereas we, a small group of people who were busy founding the Religious Youth Aliyah, spoke of twenty youths who would come to the single religious kibbutz which then existed. The situation had improved greatly since then, primarily through constant and loyal cooperation between Mrs. Szold and her helpers and between the activists of religious Zionist Jewry in the land and outside it.

In other words, until Hitler came to power the Mizrachi in the Holy Land did not have more than twenty absorption places in its one small kibbutz!

Agudath Israel's second proposal about giving over the matter to the rabbis was rejected with the excuse that it was not the rabbis' business. Now, however, the demand that the rabbis should decide the question of the education of Jewish orphans has become the demand of all Torah observant Jews in the Holy Land and abroad. In a conversation with Rabbi Herzog, published in **HaYesod** of April 18, 1943, the Rabbi said:

"There is one more thing I wish to emphasize: It is both ridiculous and painful to hear an opinion that

claims that the rabbis and the great Torah scholars have no right to express their opinion on the subject of the Teheran children, where they should be placed, and where they should be educated. On the contrary, according to the law of the Torah, 'The Court is the father of the orphans.' The rabbis of Jewry are the people responsible for the education of Jewry's orphans. It is their obligation to express an opinion and to make absolute decisions in so vital a matter."

In a conversation that Rabbi Herzog held sometime later with Ben-Gurion, the rabbi said that the very fact that Agudath Israel agreed to hand over the matter of arranging all the Teheran children to his authority is evidence of the justice of their position.

In an interview published in *Yediot Acharonot* of June 8, Rabbi Jacob Moses Toledano said:

"As far as the orphans are concerned, it is known that 'The court is the father of the orphans.' If the Chief Rabbis will not be responsible for the education of immigrant orphans, they will be sinning against Jewish law and against the future of our orphans."

To my question how to prevent a fresh recurrence of the Teheran children affair, the rabbi replied that he proposed that the expanded rabbinical council send two non-party representatives to the two commissions run by the Jewish Agency and Mrs. Szold, which deal with Youth Aliyah. The two representatives would be in constant contact with the rabbinical council about the division of the children and would thus be able to prevent the spread of secular influence among the children who immigrate to the Holy Land in the future. This proposal won the consent of the entire rabbinical council with the

exception of the representative of the Jewish Agency, Mr. M. Shapiro.

Resolutions in this spirit were passed at the convention of the rabbis of the north and the south, which took place in Tel Aviv on June 14.

What was Mizrachi's sole counter-proposal? Rabbi Neufeld stated in his article mentioned above:

As we said from the first moment, it is possible and it is necessary to have cooperation along the entire front. We will leave the matter of dividing the children until after all matters are clarified, and we hope that we will attain positive results in this matter just because of this cooperation.

His proposal avoided any clear obligation and provided no guarantee.

Even Rabbi Herzog did not succeed in influencing the Mizrachi to come to terms with the Agudah, but he did force them to a joint appearance before the Jewish Agency. On February 6, 1943, a meeting took place between the representatives of Orthodoxy and the leaders of the Jewish Agency. Present were Rabbi Herzog; Rabbi Y. M. Levin, Rabbi Eisenstadt and Dr. Isaac Breuer representing Agudath Israel; Rabbi Neufeld, Mr. Y. Farbstein and Dr. Wolfsberg representing Mizrachi; and Mrs. Szold, Dr. G. Landauer, Mr. Greenbaum, Mr. Kaplan, Mr. M. Shapiro and Rabbi Y. L. Fishman representing the Jewish Agency. Rabbi Herzog spoke sharply and identified himself with the Agudah position on this matter. He declared that people who have deserted the Torah are, to his mind, suffering from a contagious mental illness. They cannot, therefore, be trusted with the future of the children. He said he would intrepidly arouse the entire Jewish world and tell them what was being plotted against the children. Y. L. Fishman told reporters at a news conference (HaMashkif of June 1, 1943):

"In his speech, the Chief Rabbi got overly excited, and he demanded religious education for all the Teheran children. He said that if they wouldn't listen to him, he would see to it that even the Polish Government would cease to give the monthly stipend which it presently gives for every one of the Teheran refugee children."

Rabbi Fishman asked for the floor and stated that he did not accept Rabbi Herzog's position, explaining that there was no need to mix non-Jews into our internal debates. Suddenly, Rabbi Y. M. Lewin, one of the Agudah leaders, stood up and said that Rabbi Fishman had insulted the Chief Rabbi. The speaker saw this as a provocation and, in protest, left the meeting.

From that day on, Y. L. Fishman did everything in his power within the Jewish Agency to fight Agudath Israel. Mr. Eliyahu Dobkin, a member of the Agency Executive, told the Agudah representatives that Fishman had warned the Jewish Agency not to give children to the Agudah because, when he visited yeshivos, he discovered that all the children had been taught by Agudath Israel to hate Zion.

Among the Mizrahi leaders, there were some whose sense of responsibility toward the children was stronger than their party patriotism, and they tried to convince their colleagues to establish a united front with Agudath Israel and to agree to decisions rendered by rabbis. But those who sought unity were in the minority. The negotiations with Agudath Israel were broken off without any results. HaModi'in, an internal leaflet circulated among HaPoel HaMizrachi activists, published in its first issue selections from the minutes of a joint session of the Board of Directors of HaPoel HaMizrachi and representatives

of the Mizrahi World Executive and its Holy Land Board, and the Committee for Religious Youth Aliyah:

Moshe Shapiro: Before the Teheran children arrived here, joint deliberations took place between the World Executive of Mizrahi and the Agudah regarding a certain measure of cooperation. Both thought it desirable that demands made to Zionist institutions should be made jointly, so that they should feel that there is no party approach on the part of Orthodox Jewry, but rather a general approach; and that religious Jewry, headed by the Chief Rabbinate, demanded that the Teheran children receive a religious education. In fact, the joint position strongly impressed on the Zionist establishment that it had to seek a means to arrive at a formula that would satisfy Orthodox Jewry. After the delegation, comprised of Mizrahi, Agudah and the Chief Rabbinate representatives, appeared before the Jewish Agency Executive, a decision was arrived at -- it has been published in the meantime -- according to which children up to the age of 14 would be assigned to schools according to their family origin and those about whom there was doubt would be assigned to religious education. Now, when the decision is about to be carried out, the question arises of dividing the children and sending them to specific institutions. The Agudah proposes to divide them 50-50. It maintains that most of the children are religious and that they originate from Agudah families. Nevertheless, it recognizes the rights of the Mizrahi and HaPoel HaMizrachi and agrees that Mizrahi and HaPoel HaMizrachi schools should

receive 50%. Mizrachi proposed that Agudah should receive those children who are known to be from Agudah families, and the number of these children is far from small. In the meanwhile, the third side is waiting for Mizrachi and Agudah to fall out among themselves, which would be to its advantage.

Shlomo Zalmen Shragai: What would happen if no agreement was reached between Agudah and Mizrachi? Does that mean that the children will automatically be given a secular education? If an agreement is not reached, does that mean that Agudah has a chance of getting all the children?

A. Kestenbaum: Even if we should reach an agreement with Agudah, it does not have enough absorption places.

Mosh Unna: How is it possible to negotiate with Agudah when it is busy viciously attacking us in *Kol Yisrael* throughout the entire negotiations?

A. M. Genachowski: What does the Jewish Agency Executive's decision about "nationalistic education" mean?

Moshe Shapiro: The Agudah does not have many absorption places. But it demands that certain institutions be recognized (He means yeshivos -- Ed.) as satisfactory absorption places. By "nationalistic education" is meant the Hebrew language and no preaching against Zionism. If we do not reach agreement, the Jewish Agency's Youth Aliyah Commission will make the decision.

H. Farbstein: It is noteworthy that the Agudah proposed to set up a rabbinical committee to establish the family origins of the children and that Rabbi

Herzog should decide about those that are in doubt. We did not accept this proposal. I think we should accept it.

Moshe Shapiro: The Agudah proposed that children above the age of 14 should be provided for according to absorption places available and those who wish vocational training also according to the absorption places available in such schools.

Rabbi A. Neufeld: In my opinion, we should support the Agudah position about including the yeshivos as places of absorption. Such cooperation with the Agudah is desirable because it may lead to a general unification. But not at any price.

A. M. Genachowski: I appreciate the Agudah enthusiasm for the children, and I support Rabbi Neufeld's proposal, but on the condition that the Agudah will give the children a religious nationalistic education.

N. Aminach: The Agudah operates on principles that oppose Jewish thinking and the Zionist basis of our ideology and we may not hand over to it children whom it will educate to be anti-Zionists. Only those who definitely come from an Agudah background or who were educated in the Agudah educational network can be given over for Agudah education.

A. B. Ginsburger: There is much value in cooperation between Mizrachi and Agudah in this period and the cooperation is likely to bring additional benefits. I do not fear that children who are educated by Agudah will run off to the diaspora. We should continue negotiations, but under no circumstances can we agree to a 50-50 division.

P. Rosenblatt: I am amazed that you ignore

completely the institution that has for years been dealing with the immigration of religious youth -- the institution known as the Committee for Religious Youth Aliyah. It is recognized as representative of all of Orthodox Jewry, not merely of Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi. In the course of time, we have dealt with religious youth of all circles. In our opinion, our position must be that we give to the Agudah only those children who definitely come from Agudah families.

Dr. Wolfsberg: The battle between Mizrachi and Agudah is a fundamental battle for influence in the absorption of religious youth and making arrangements for them. Let us not forget our purpose as the movement of religious revival. I do not believe that the Agudah has added much strength to our battle or to our achievement as expressed in the above decision of the Jewish Agency Executive. This accomplishment is a direct result of our successful dealings with religious immigrant youth all these many years. Let us not forget the lesson we learned from the Agudah in the diaspora. We must be firm: The privilege of absorption can be given solely to those places that are pioneering (in other words, not to yeshivos -- Ed). At the same time, we must seriously consider expanding our absorption capacity.

S. Z. Shragai: We may not exaggerate in criticizing the Agudah for its approach to the question of the children and its taking advantage of the issues. It is doing so in accord with its view of the matter. About us, too, the leftists say that we use religion as a cover for political purposes. We must base our opposition on our perspective of the Holy Land and national unity.

Y. Bernstein: The Agudah did not change, and by our mild approach we are only helping it turn into a power. Agudah wants to make a big deal out of the issue of the children, and I find no reason to obligate ourselves to yield to the Agudah. The first premise must be that no religious child can fall into nonreligious hands. We have been told that five hundred of the total number of children come from religious homes. Out of this number, we must absorb as many as we are capable of absorbing. The rest we can give to the Agudah. On principle, we may agree to hand over to the Agudah only the children of its members or whomever we do not have absorption space for.

M. Unna: The need for an agreement with the Agudah is not yet clear to me. Nevertheless, I think we should not limit the concept of an absorption-place.

Y. Leslau: I find that the Agudah helped on the issue of the children. Our enemies are always using the Agudah against us. It is very important that the relationship between us continue to be a good one. And we must consider the wishes of the children's parents.

A. Kestenbaum: The issue of the children reminds me of the certificate issue in the diaspora. In this country, there are many forsaken children to whom no one pays any attention. The point is that in this case different circles see a chance to gain something. We established the Youth Aliyah organization many years ago as a serious approach to this issue. Let us not lend a hand to those who seek to make political capital out of the matter. In my opinion, we should not agree to any division by percentages.

D. Intriligator: It is important to point out that the area in which Youth Aliyah operates is not limited solely in regard to the Mizrachi.

M. Shapiro: If we would constantly remember the interparty relations of the past, everything that was ever done to us, we would never have made it to the General Committee, etc. The same is true in relation to Agudah. We must forget the Agudah-Mizrachi relationship abroad because, in the meanwhile, many things have changed. To our sorrow, the religious reserve abroad no longer exists to a large degree. We must establish a relationship with the religious circles close to us. Positive attitudes toward any secular organization have never brought us any members. The Agudah is a factor in the Yishuv, and we must forget what happened between us in the past. It is a fact apparently that a large part of the children come from Agudah families. I, therefore, propose that we reckon with the family and educational origins of the children. Those that are in doubt should be given to us. If the Agudah will insist on taking those that are in doubt, we can deal with that question later. I also think that we should get the yeshivos accredited as absorption places.

Decision: To agree to hand over to the Agudah children about whom it is known that they come from families or from schools that belonged to the Agudah.

At a meeting of the Mizrachi leaders which took place on May 13, Moshe Shapiro said, "History will not forgive the Mizrachi its great sin in not reaching agreement with Agudath Israel about the Teheran children."

HaTzofeh of July 16, reported Moshe Shapiro's words at a session of the HaPoel HaMizrachi Executive:

Because of the error of our friends and colleagues on the Commission for Religious Youth Aliyah who stated at the home of the Chief Rabbi that we agreed to give over for Agudah education only those children whose parents were Agudists and not those who studied in schools belonging to this party, the negotiations between us and Agudath Israel were terminated.

There are two approaches to dealing with Agudath Israel: a) In these terrible times one must seek, insofar as possible, to maintain harmony at home in the Holy Land and within Orthodoxy; or b) We many not yield an iota to this party. In my opinion, those children who were educated in Agudah schools should be given over to its authority, and the relations between us should not be strained. We cannot today hope for aliyah from England and from America. We must, therefore, build a religious Holy Land with the power and the strength that we have here. Where are we to seek this human material? In Mishmar HaEmek, in Ein Charod, or in Ashdot Ya'akov? Or in the yeshivos and the other strongholds of Orthodox Jewry?

On the one hand, you have HaShomer HaTzair -- people who not only do not observe the Torah and its commandments, but do not even know what Judaism is. And, on the other hand, you have Jews who, it is true, opposed us, but there is a fundamental common denominator: faith in G-d and in the Torah.

These people are our future in this land. They are the remnants of the Orthodoxy of Europe. Clearly, if

we attract them, they will come to us. And now we have the Teheran affair building a fresh wall between us. We did not correctly foresee the results of this disagreement, and the results are not in our favor.

Keeping others at a distance is poor evidence of self-assurance. If you believe in our movement, you can agree to certain concessions in order to have peace.

A strong movement has the power to overcome all stumbling blocks. A movement which serves the remnants of Orthodox Jewry, which bears responsibility for all of Jewry, can reach an understanding with another segment of this Jewry. All the more so when certain statements published and oral, originating in our camp insulted the Chief Rabbi and the other rabbis in this land. They are a sin against religious Jewry. Let us admit the truth: we may not speak in this manner about Jewry's rabbis. Let us be courageous enough to say to ourselves some unpleasant words; without them the movement is likely to lose its moral authority.

We were put to the test -- the affair of the Teheran children -- and we failed. We have helped the outside factor which was interested in divisiveness within the Yishuv.

Moshe Shapiro was the only one to express regret and the hope of understanding and peace with Agudath Israel. Yitzchok Wertfel (Raphael) said in his speech at the same meeting (BaMishmor of July 12):

I am happy that all the members who have spoken, with the exception of comrade Shapiro, are united in their stand against the Agudah.

The Double Game

If the Mizrachi was as hard as steel in its dealings with the Agudath Israel proposals, it was as soft as putty in the hands of Youth Aliyah. Moreover, it proposed and secretly approved many things which it publicly decried. Dozens of articles and resolutions announced that Mizrachi wished to give all the Teheran children a religious education. In HaTzofeh of March 28, 1943, "The Writer" stated:

Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi are waging battle for a full religious education for all Jewish children.

In an article headed "Satan's Involvement", Mr. Bernstein wrote in HaTzofeh of May 28:

Mizrachi, as a national religious Zionist movement, firmly stands behind its opinion that all refugee children, the responsibility for whose education rests upon the nation as a whole, under whose aegis they are receiving their education, must receive a religious-nationalist education, a complete Jewish education. Regarding these children from Poland, there is an additional claim: that of the force of their religious parental homes and the wish of the parents to educate their children to follow in their path. The principal demand of religious education for all the refugee children has not been accepted by the nonreligious circles.

Another article in HaTzofeh (May 27) reiterated the Mizrachi Executive Board's decision that all the Teheran children should receive a religious-nationalist education.

All of this was for public consumption. Privately, however, HaTzofeh of June 11 reported a statement by Mrs. Szold:

The Religious Commission later agreed to divide the children so that half of them would be given a religious education. I could not immediately decide in Atlit who should receive a religious education and who should not.

As is well known, the Youth Aliyah Religious Commission is comprised completely of Mizrachi representatives. Nevertheless, Rabbi Neufeld claimed in **HaTzofeh** of May 3:

...that at one of the meetings of the Agudah people with Mrs. Szold, they demanded a third of the children. Of itself, the question arises: Is this the price that allows you to hand over the great majority of the children to irreligious education?

This line was repeated by the Mizrachi pundits time and again, until Mr. Dobkin declared at a press conference held on May 26 (**Davar** of May 27):

The Agudah people have one "modest" request: that all the hundreds of Teheran children who have arrived and all the tens of thousands of children we hope to bring here should be given over for religious education under the absolute authority of the Chief Rabbi. No party and no educational system have yet consented to a "uniform education" under the supervision of the Chief Rabbinate in accord with the Agudah demands.

"No other party and no other educational system" including, obviously, the Mizrachi.

Officially and publicly they derided the principle of choosing one's own education, which the Jewish Agency had decided upon for the children age 14 and over. Rabbi Neufeld wrote in **HaTzofeh** on February 28, 1943:

...One cannot follow the principle of "self-

determination" for children over 14 whose home background is indeterminate. Their wanderings and circumstances over the past three years, particularly the coercion by those who were supposed to supervise them, are capable of anesthetizing them and uprooting from them every independent tendency.

In **HaTzofeh**, of March 28, "The Inscraper" wrote:

The pressure at meetings and in the press, the demands and the stand of the Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi representatives in the Jewish Agency and in the offices of Youth Aliyah -- all of these led to the decision by the establishment that:

- a) The children who come from religious homes will be handed over for religious education.
- b) Children who come from nonreligious homes will be handed over for nonreligious education.
- c) Indeterminate cases (Mrs. Szold will decide which ones are dubious) will also be handed over for religious education.
- d) Children beyond a specific age will be allowed to choose for themselves.

One cannot say that religious Jewry can be satisfied 100% by the above decisions. In particular, it cannot consent to paragraph "d". We see what means have been used to win children aged 13 and 14 away from G-d and His Torah. Religious Jewry has not accepted the situation.

In **HaTzofeh** of May 25, Mr. Shragai gave his opinion that:

A decision that sins against reality and the human conscience allows religious children above the age of 14 "the choice" of picking an irreligious lifestyle -- a "choice" accompanied by a guarantee of this-worldly pleasures.

Yet in a report sent by Mrs. Szold to the Jewish Agency, which was reported in **Davar** of May 19, we find:

It is noteworthy that the right for self-determination given to children age 14 and over was approved at the very beginning of Youth Aliyah by its advisory committee which was comprised of representatives of the Mizrachi movement.

Fishman, in his speech at a meeting of the Mizrachi Executive, said that the principle of self-determination was proposed by Mizrachi representative Moshe Shapiro. In **HaTzofeh** of May 19, his statement was published:

At another session of the Jewish Agency Executive, I demanded religious education for all the children. I agreed to Shapiro's proposal for the well-known division of the children above the age of 14 - according to the child's will; up to the age of 14 - according to the family affiliation. The indeterminate ones it was decided to leave to Mrs. Szold's decision.

I requested that Shapiro share in making this decision.

Just in case someone might think that the Mizrachi representatives had acted in this instance against their party's wishes, **HaTzofeh** of May 27 informs us:

The Executive Committee ratifies unanimously the positions taken by our representatives in the Jewish Agency Executive and in the Youth Aliyah Commission concerning the Teheran children, and appreciates their battle for a religious-nationalist education for these children.

The publication of the fact that the Mizrachi representatives were those who proposed and consented to the principle of "self-determination", as a result of which 213 children age 14 and over were sent to irreligious education brought about

confusion in the Mizrachi camp. In order to confuse the impression, Mr. Bernstein wrote in **HaTzofeh** of May 28:

Decisions were arrived at by the Jewish Agency Executive to the effect that all the children up to the age of 14 who are from religious homes, and who are themselves religious, including those who are indeterminate (it being impossible to clarify whether their parents were religious) will be given over to a religious education system. The exceptions are children aged over 14 who are not religious and do not wish to go to religious absorption places. Moshe Shapiro testified that these decisions were acceptable to rabbis and yeshiva deans who are not in Mizrachi circles because they assure that no religious child and no child from a religious home will be sent to a place that is not religious.

To what degree this principle was "acceptable to rabbis and yeshiva deans" the following resolution made at a convention of rabbis and yeshiva deans on March 9 will testify:

This rabbinical assembly, hearing that there are those who wish to sort and divide the children into religious and nonreligious groups, assert that according to the Torah it is forbidden to make such classifications.¹

The Agudah World Executive wrote a letter to the Jewish Agency on February 15 about this matter, reiterating its position that even the children over 14 years of age were not capable of deciding their educational futures.

Publicly, the Mizrachi leaders decried and spoke out against the arrangements in the transit camps. The Mizrachi Executive decided that the practice of placing the Teheran children under the guidance of both religious and nonreligious **madrichim** was a

¹ I. HaDerech, no. 26.

failure resulting in shameful consequences. It demanded that the Jewish Agency no longer continue that practice.² **HaBoker** of July 5, stated:

A Mizrachi activist, Mr. Elinson, one of the leaders of the Executive Committee of the party sent a letter to the editor of **HaBoker** which makes it clear that a decision to divide the Teheran children by age for religious education and nonreligious education stems from HaPoel HaMizrachi circles. Mr. Elinson refers to a letter-to-the-editor of **HaBoker** written by Rabbi M. Ostrowsky which stated: "When it became known throughout the **Yishuv** in Mizrachi circles and among Orthodox Jewry in general that the Jewish Agency Executive had decided in Adar 1 that only children who come from Orthodox homes and are below the age of 14 will be provided for according to their choice without consideration of whether they come from Orthodox homes, the Mizrachi, and Orthodox Jewry with it, was shocked and viewed with great trepidation the result of these decisions."

"I beg of you to explain to me the reason for this shock," writes Mr. Elinson. "What brought it about? Don't you know that that decision as a whole was accepted in the Jewish Agency Executive on the basis of a proposal by Moshe Shapiro, the representative of HaPoel HaMizrachi? It is claimed that he made this proposal not as a matter of his own opinion, but as the opinion of several rabbis who are very close to Agudath Israel circles and with whom he was in constant contact on the issue of the Teheran children. The World Executive of the Mizrachi party, it is true, did not vote on the compromise proposal that Moshe

1. **HaTzofeh**, May 27.

Shapiro presented. Nevertheless, it ratified it after the fact. So why the shock?"

In **HaTzofeh** of February 26, "The Writer" stated:

Mizrachi and HaPoel HaMizrachi representatives within the Zionist establishment do not cease protesting and demanding an end to the "concentration camps", that the children be set free, that each one be sent to his place and that the children not be poisoned against G-d's commandments and the Jewish faith.

Privately Dr. Wolfsberg, a Mizrachi leader and a director of the Religious Commission of Youth Aliyah, expressed his complete satisfaction with the current situation in the transit camps. He stated this at a United Jewish Appeal dinner and this was reported by Aaron Bialeri, a United Jewish Appeal activist, to Pincus Lewin.

Publicly, Mizrachi claimed that yeshivos were also to be recognized as absorption places. Thus, in **HaTzofeh** of March 28, "The Writer" stated that Mizrachi had places in their own yeshivos for the children desiring to study there. Privately, however, they decided in accord with Dr. Wolfsberg's proposal at the meeting of Mizrachi leaders, the minutes of which were quoted earlier from **HaModi'in**, the internal organ of HaPoel HaMizrachi.

We must be firm that the privilege of absorption be given solely to absorption places that are pioneering.

This demand greatly endangered the possibility of absorbing all the children within the Mizrachi framework itself. Nevertheless, they did not refrain from proposing it as long as they could torpedo the hopes of Agudath Israel. The absorption places that Mizrachi had in its kibbutzim were limited. It could barely find room for the children it did receive.

In a **HaTzofeh** editorial on April 23, Mr. B. criticized the delay in establishing absorption places for the children due to financial difficulties. He said that saving the children was more important than financial considerations.

It was Agudath Israel which proposed the yeshivos as places of absorption. The famous yeshivos -- the Chevron Yeshiva, that of Petach Tikva, S'fas Emes, Tiferes Yisroel in Haifa, Beis Yosef and Beis Yosef Tzvi -- informed Agudath Israel of their readiness to receive Teheran children in their dormitories.

This is how the Mizrachi played a two-faced game throughout the entire period. As far as one could see, it seemed to be safe-guarding the religious education of the children with all its strength. Secretly, however, it yielded, compromised and gave away to the Jewish Agency and its Youth Aliyah department as much as it could. Only when the entire Orthodox rabbinat in Great Britain declared their boycott of United Jewish Appeal did the Mizrachi openly offer its services to the Jewish Agency and apply all its energies to undermining the efforts of world Orthodox Jewry, and greatly weaken its position.

"Rabbi Yehuda Leib Fishman's Activities"

The news about the boycott of United Jewish Appeal upset Mizrachi. At a press conference, Y. L. Fishman talked about his role (**HaOlam** of June 7):

The speaker himself, throughout the entire period, stood aloof from this matter and took no part in it. However, when they began the attack from abroad, and, by spreading all kinds of reports, got the rabbinical organizations of England and of the United States to threaten to boycott the United Jewish Appeal and to take similar action, he then found it necessary to become involved.

The Executive Committee of Mizrachi met in emergency session as did the expanded Chief Rabbinat Council. In an interview with Rabbi J. M. Toledano, **Yediot Acharonot** of June 8, reported the rabbi's definition of the different directions taken by Agudath Israel and the Mizrachi:

The non-Zionist group sought to intensify the boycott against United Jewish Appeal. The other circle sought to retain the integrity of United Jewish Appeal, even at the expense of religious education.

On April 23, even before the boycott was begun, Mr. B. wrote in the lead article in **HaTzofeh**:

About 30% of the children, who, according to the principles established by the Jewish Agency Executive, should have received a religious education were sent to nonreligious absorption places.

This very fact justifiably aroused great bitterness in Orthodox circles, which have been suspicious of this entire set-up....

...The policy of political "balance" has now become a major factor in contrast to what was customary in previous aliyot dealt with by Youth Aliyah. This factor, it seems, has led to the inclusion of leftist people -- besides the people from the Youth Aliyah office -- in sorting the children. The reason given was that members of the Youth Aliyah Committee were participating, but this committee has existed alongside the Youth Aliyah office for years and functions as a part of it. What justification is there for including people who are not from the Youth Aliyah office in the clarification and sorting process? And this is not all. That same factor acted as a determinant in choosing the absorption places for the children. As we have published in our newspaper,

the director of the office decided to send children who were classified as "dubious" in terms of their religious origins to Beit Yehoshua, to Ahava and even to Nahalal and Kfar Yehoshua (all nonreligious settlements), in contravention of the decision of the Jewish Agency Executive that the indeterminate children would be sent to religious absorption places and despite the vigorous opposition of the Commission for Religious Youth Aliyah.

After the boycott was announced, however, Fishman's journal **BaMishmor** (no. 156) wrote in an entirely different fashion on the very same subject and called the institutions Ahava and Beit Yehoshua "traditional". No longer 30% of the children, but only 10% were cheated out of a religious education:

We conceive this division as a great achievement, attained solely thanks to the Mizrachi and the efforts of its leaders and activists. The Mizrachi continues even now to wage battle on this issue since this division is not fully in keeping with the Jewish Agency Executive according to which several dozen more percent of the children should have been given a religious education -- this must be amended. Yet the very division itself provides great satisfaction for those loyal to Judaism. We could only achieve a similar division in the educational system in Palestine in general! It is clear then that the Agudah published defamatory lies, intending to take advantage of every incident and opportunity to assault our national institutions and to denigrate them.

In an article headlined "Satan's Deeds", in **HaTzofeh** of May 28, the HaPoel HaMizrachi ideologist, Y. Bernstein wrote about the boycott:

The system of bans and boycotts is fundamentally wrong. It is not respectable and it does not help at all. On the contrary, it repels and harms. This approach is not only impractical, it is also wrong because we harm ourselves. Every disturbance, every stumbling block to the efforts of Zionist labor is a stumbling block for all of Jewry, for the settlement of the land, and for its construction. At this awful moment for the Jewish people, when the building up of the land and the settlements are the only hope and consolation for the masses of our people so bloodied in the diaspora, every disturbance strikes at the apple of the nation's eye. That is the greatest possible sin against G-d and against the nation. If the situation has reached the point where rabbis have erred and have been misled by this approach -- certainly out of good intentions and for good purpose -- this could only be Satan's work to lead us into sin.

On this same subject, Mr. Shragai, also a leader of HaPoel HaMizrachi, wrote:

United Jewish Appeal is not a private business operated by a private organization which is to be punished for its behavior. United Jewish Appeal is the fund for the nation, the national fund which makes it possible for Jews to be absorbed in the Holy Land -- for Jews who are good and for Jews who are bad alike. For all the members of the nation as they are. No one has the right or permission to punish the nation, to deny it the opportunity to absorb its children within itself even if the Zionist Federation sins in terms of religion.

This is not the way HaPoel HaMizrachi reacted in 1933 when it believed that it would be denied its share of settlement

land. In Netiva, the HaPoel HaMizrachi organ edited by both Shragai and Bernstein, Mr. A. BarNachmani wrote (no. 18-19, 5692):

Understandably, in so tragic a situation, we must draw the appropriate conclusions. United Jewish Appeal has ceased as of today to be for us the basis for the building of the Holy Land, except for a specific segment and for no one else. From now on we cannot assist this fund. No Orthodox Jew and no loyal Zionist may serve them from now on. We may not allow ourselves to be stepped on by people who trample the feelings of thousands of Orthodox Jewish Youth. Not a single cent may be given to that fund which serves merely one section of the people and does not serve the building of the nation -- until our demands are granted.

This open attack will not quickly be erased from the history of the building up of our land. The vengeance of history will ultimately be satisfied.

This was not merely the personal request of the writer of the article. HaPoel HaMizrachi officially sent a circular for all religious Jews abroad to boycott the Zionist fund. Not only was this tactic not considered "evil and horrible", but it was very helpful: thanks to it, HaPoel HaMizrachi attained the territory it sought.

The boycott of 1943 announced by the rabbis abroad did its work successfully. Were it not for the denials sent abroad by Mizrahi, or the pressure it applied to the chief rabbinates until it was compelled to ask the rabbis abroad to drop the boycott, it is conceivable that the demands of Orthodox Jewry would have won out. Rabbi J. M. Toledano said in an interview published in *Yediot Acharonot*:

This was the first time that the Jewish Agency

invited the chief rabbinates of the Holy Land to express its opinion in this serious matter. That took place only after the pressure from the rabbis in London.

At a meeting of the Mizrahi Executive, Fishman openly declared war against Rabbi Herzog. **HaMashkif** of May 27, reported:

The demand that the Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land must be a Zionist was voiced by Rabbi Fishman at the session of the Mizrahi Executive which took place last night. Rabbi Fishman accused Rabbi Herzog of responsibility for the scandal that was created around the Teheran children and for supporting the demands of the Agudah people. Rabbi Fishman's words aroused a storm, but the speaker remained firm in his opinion that the Chief Rabbi must publish a clear statement of his stand on Zionism and also on the entire Teheran children scandal, or that he must resign.

Among other points raised at that meeting was the fact that the Chief Rabbi was elected for only a five-year period and that at the end of that term, this issue could affect his re-election.

The meeting lasted until late, and the resolutions were passed on the Central Committee.

Despite this attack against Rabbi Herzog, **HaTzofeh** of May 27 reported that Fishman was authorized by the Mizrahi Executive to demand that a Mizrahi individual be employed in the Youth Aliyah office where all the decisions were made. The article went on to say:

The Executive Committee received with satisfaction the Jewish Agency's decision to leave all clarification and decisions concerning all the above

cases to the Mizrachi representative in the Agency Executive, Rabbi Y. L. Fishman. And at present it requests that this be implemented as soon as possible.

Armed with the authorization of the Mizrachi Executive, Fishman set to work. The first thing he did was to send a telegram abroad denying the contents of Rabbi Herzog's telegrams, as well as those of the Torah scholars in the Holy Land. In his telegrams he pointed out that besides the children given over to Mizrachi, "another 70 children were sent to other religious places, specifically Agudah, Ahava and Beit Yehoshua" (BaMishmor of May 28). The latter two are institutions that even Mrs. Szold refused to consider religious, and the Mizrachi itself initially protested against having religious children sent there. But Fishman included them in the same breath with Agudah institutions in order to mislead public opinion abroad and to create the impression that most of the children were sent to religious educational institutions.

After Rabbi Herzog refused to ask the rabbis of England to remove the boycott against United Jewish Appeal, Fishman convened a press conference on the subject of the Teheran children. Here are some typical statements from his speech as recorded in HaBoker of June 1:

When he spoke about the negotiations with Chief Rabbi Herzog, Rabbi Fishman used several insolent expressions in reference to him. He declared that he originally opposed his reelection as Chief Rabbi. "I wanted a rabbi for Torah, I said, and not for the English." In his opinion, the Chief Rabbi "is not a Zionist and he is influenced too much by the Agudah." The speaker heaped fire and brimstone upon the Agudah.

"If I had asked the rabbi, I might never have come to the Holy Land."

"I, for my part, wouldn't have given the children to either HaShomer HaTzair or the Agudah. The very granting of children for Agudah education by the Jewish Agency is a result of the Agency's lack of common sense. I accuse the Mizrachi here, too, because they seek too much to find favor in the eyes of the Agudah."

HaMaskhif of June 1, reported:

In speaking about the personality of Chief Rabbi Herzog, the speaker declared among other statements that he had originally opposed Rabbi Herzog's candidacy for Chief Rabbi. He is indeed "a good Jew, but the problem is that he likes everybody." To further questions as to whether Rabbi Fishman thinks that the education given by HaShomer Hatzair is less anti-Zionist than the education given by Agudath Israel, and whether he is unaware that all the divisiveness is a result of the Mizrachi dealing in the children's souls -- when, as a religious movement, Mizrachi should not have agreed to even one child receiving an anti-Zionist education -- Rabbi Fishman did not give a satisfactory reply.

Davar of June 1, reported in Fishman's name:

The major divisive issue was the ninety-five remaining children whom the commission, headed by Mrs. Szold, found after long investigation to be from nonreligious homes, and therefore sent to nonreligious absorption places. It was around these children that rumors were stirred up and lies were told. Because the Jewish Agency did not wish to give these children an education that was contrary to the will of their parents, telegrams were sent over Rabbi Herzog's signature to the rabbis and communal

leaders of England, America and South Africa to boycott the Zionist funds.

I did not participate in a single meeting on the subject of the Teheran children. Then I got a telephone call from Rabbi Herzog's office, inviting me to a meeting of rabbis with members of the Jewish Agency Executive. I went over. Rabbi Herzog entered the meeting together with Rabbi Lewin and Dr. Breuer, heads of the Agudah. I think that the Chief Rabbi ought to have enough pride not to walk in with people who disapprove of what he approves and approve of what he disapproves..

Rabbis in the heart of the Jewish people are undermining it. These rabbis and their ilk, who fulminated against the Zionist movement abroad, thus keeping at least 100,000 Jews from *aliyah* to Palestine, are not ashamed here to undermine the foundations of Zionism. The land was built up despite them. By what right are they living here?.

"Hayesod of June 7, reported some additional comments by Fishman:

Even at this session the most depressing fact was, in our opinion, not the words themselves said by the speaker Rabbi Fishman, but his sarcastic tone, the degrading way he spoke against the rabbis, the irony and the bitter sarcasm regarding the way the Torah leaders work. This was the basic tone of his words.

One-liners such as "Had I been a Zion-hater, I would have been considered a genius and a tzaddik (saint)." "There were great and good people, as soon as they became Zionists, their greatness and their righteousness disappeared." Such "gems" were received last night amid thunderous laughter.

In speaking about the protests from the United States, he emphasized that he was not impressed by that at all. "Will the rabbis of America teach us ethical behavior?" And he added, "When I visited America, I proposed to the Rabbinical Union there that they should not get involved in the area of activity chosen by the Mizrachi, but should deal with other areas.

What are the areas of Mizrachi activities? Only three things: the Jewish people, the Jewish Torah, and the Jewish land. The rest leave for the rabbis of America."

When the Chafetz Chaim returned from the Agudath Israel Convention in Vienna, Fishman said he met him and said to him, "Now that you listened to slander there, you must go burn your book on guarding one's tongue."

Fishman's insolent outburst aroused public protest even in the nonreligious press. **HaMashkif** of June 6, commented:

Even after the publicizing of the details of the press conference with Rabbi Fishman on the subject of Teheran children, we do not yet understand why this task was assigned to him of all people, since he says he hardly had anything to do with the problem and only looked at it as an ordinary Jew. It seems that the explanation lies in a somewhat different aspect: Rabbi Fishman was chosen for this task in order to attack Chief Rabbi Herzog, in order to bring a more powerful "educational influence" to bear on the entire issue....

We are not concerned with the fact that Rabbi Fishman opposed the election of Rabbi Herzog.... We are concerned about maintaining respect for the

rabbinate and for our rabbis. We think that Rabbi Fishman was obligated to mention that "a rabbi who is willing to forego his respect is not listened to." Even though we are neither a party nor a religious movement, we believe that the respect and honor due the Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land is not the private territory of the Mizrachi and Agudath Israel alone, but is the territory of every Jew.

We assume that there can be differences of opinion -- even sharp ones -- between Rabbi Herzog and Rabbi Fishman. However, we regard the form of the attack by Rabbi Fishman at his last press conference as a danger to what yet remains of the influence of the rabbinate on our lives. Because we do not agree to have the rabbinate included in any party framework at all; and because we recognize it as a general, national institution, which more than once was able -- at difficult times for the nation -- to rise to heights still unreachd by our honored institutions, we must protest the form of expression and the content of the expressions used by this leader of the Mizrachi movement and member of the Jewish Agency Executive.

BenZion Katz, in an article in *Hazeman* of June 3 also deplored Fishman's attack on Rabbi Herzog. Fishman was further criticized by Mr. Avivi in *HaBoker* June 8 in an article headlined "They Have Stabbed Their Master":

What I have understood from the words of the Mizrachi rabbi and from his attack on the Chief Rabbi at the press conference amounts to the following: the Chief Rabbi is an absolute stranger when it comes to the pathways and byways of the Mizrachi and the Agudath, and he is unaware that between these two sanctified territories there is yet a

third sanctity, the money disbursed by the great funds. And truth to tell, someone who has not really delved into the depths of Mizrachi politics will find it difficult to distinguish between the purple of the Mizrachi and the indigo of the Agudath.

The members of our Jewish Agency treat themselves as members of a government in creation. And not merely a government but a totalitarian government in creation. The intrusion of any stranger into their group or of any idea, concept or words by an independent individual appears to them to be an attempt to undermine them or, as they always say, "to undermine the Yishuv."

In a similar vein, I think the the horns Rabbi Fishman grew in order to gore the Chief Rabbi were not given him by the authority of the Torah, but rather by the authority of the Jewish Agency. In other words, with political authority that stands beyond the Yishuv, beyond matters of faith and the Torah, an authority responsible only to itself that rules of itself and stands above public opinion in this land. There is only one fear that terrorizes this lion of Judah, the fear of the Mosquito called the National Funds.

In *HaMashkif* of June 10, Mr. Amitai wrote in an article headlined "The Scandal of the Rabbis":

In contrast to Rabbi Herzog, who demands much, the Mizrachi people are demanding as little as possible. They are willing to yield on the demand for religious and spiritual ideals in exchange for paying lip-service to some mode of worship. They forego principles in exchange for the insignificant. Their policy is the policy of barter. They swap idealistic demands for gains in position and very frequently for

money, for a budget....Mizrachi is not dealing with the secular in order to sanctify it; it rather deals with sanctity in order to secularize it.

The Chief Rabbinate Council published the following protest:

The Council of the Chief Rabbinate of the Holy Land in expanded session presided over by the Chief Rabbi and by the Rishon LeTzion, Rabbi BenZion Uziel, dealt with the attack by a certain member of the Jewish Agency upon the revered personality of the Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Rabbi Y. I. Herzog, in connection with his position on the subject of the Teheran children.

These attacks shocked the hearts of every person who is concerned for the honor of the Torah and for its standard bearer.

The entire council sees all this as the direct and obvious result of the sacrifice the Chief Rabbi took upon himself by risking his position over this painful matter. It finds that the insults do not have the power to reduce his honor and his renown from one end of the world to the other as a master of Torah and fear of G-d, as a wondrous genius of righteous integrity which precedes even his wisdom. There is therefore room for no other reaction than to encourage our great master and say to him, "Go from strength to strength."

HaYesod of June 18, published a telegram from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis in America to the Jewish Agency, signed by its presidium, Rabbis Rosenberg, Silver and Leventhal:

"We do not recognize Rabbi Fishman as an authority in matters of religious education for refugee children, and we demand religious education for all

the children in accordance to the instructions of the Chief Rabbinate of the Holy Land."

HaBoker of June 10 reported:

In the last several days, Rabbi Herzog has received several hundred telegrams from different places in the land and from many different people. The senders of the telegrams encouraged the Chief Rabbi to fight for religious education. A delegation visited Rabbi Herzog and encouraged him to continue to battle for traditional education.

The Mizrachi was the only group that did not decry the behavior of its representative, Yehuda L. Fishman; this policy was followed as well by its organ, HaTzofeh. Mizrachi's undermining of the demands of Orthodox Jewry and of Rabbi Herzog's position were partially successful. Chief Rabbi Herzog, who constantly and courageously defended the demands of Orthodox Jewry, was unable to withstand the attacks and the pressure and yielded. In a telegram he asked the rabbis of England to revoke the boycott against the funds, despite the fact the Jewish Agency had in no way satisfied the demands of Orthodox Jewry for which Rabbi Herzog had fought. Still, the Jewish Agency did not correct its past mistakes concerning the Teheran children. Regarding the future, it made meaningless statements, as HaAretz of June 1 reported:

The transit camps for the children who will be coming to the Holy Land from abroad will only last several days (according to one proposal no more than ten days) and not weeks as with the Teheran children. There will be no trips to kibbutzim unlike our earlier policy. A special religious supervisor will be allowed in. This decision was made at a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive this Sunday in Jerusalem. The

proposal was made by Rabbi Fishman and unanimously accepted.

In other words, self-determination by children age 14 and over would remain a policy. Transit camps staffed by nonreligious **madrichim** with a sprinkling of religious **madrichim** would be the same as before. There was no pledge to prevent little children from Orthodox homes from being sent with their older siblings who chose nonreligious educational institutions. There was a promise to desist from trips to kibbutzim, but there was no commitment to stop other forms of propaganda and pressure. They did agree to let one more Mizrachi worker into the Youth Aliyah office, but they did not agree to submit the issues to the authority of the rabbinat. In brief, the Jewish Agency did not attempt to correct a single fundamental problem — neither of the past, nor for the future.

Understandably, the above Jewish agency decisions were entirely acceptable to the Mizrachi, particularly since its representative, Fishman, had proposed them. **HaTzofeh** of June 2 expressed its total satisfaction in a lead article, "Correcting the Wrong".

This, it seems, closes this unfortunate and painful affair. If there will be good will on both sides, unlike in the past, this will be a good and satisfactory ending and even a good beginning toward the future.

War Against the Agudath Israel

In his book, **The Ideological Bases of Mizrachi**, Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel wrote:

The problem is that many in our camp have the mistaken notion that the entire purpose of the Mizrachi is to do battle with the Agudah, and this mutual war is not merely a means, but an end unto itself which they employ at all times.

Four years ago when the Agudah expressed interest in joining the Jewish Agency, with the condition that general education should not be in the hands of the Jewish Agency, we should have supported that demand for that is why we were originally created. And, finally, when we had the opportunity to force a decision in the matter and to draw the Agudah into the positive development of the Holy Land, we went hand in hand with the nonreligious and kept the Agudah out.

The war against the Agudah served as a guideline for the Mizrachi in the Teheran affair as well. The Mizrachi leaders knew that breaking the united religious front would cost Orthodox Jewry hundreds of these Jewish children, yet it would consent to leaving these children out in the cold, to having them taken away from the Torah, so long as they were not sent to Agudah schools or to yeshivos. Fishman declared in Tel Aviv, in the presence of Rabbi Herzog, that he preferred HaShomer HaTzair education, "which is nationalistically wholesome", to Agudah education which he found "humanely and nationalistically" lacking. The propaganda fomented in the press against Agudath Israel on the issue of the Teheran children originated in the Mizrachi press. It found the time ripe to destroy the Agudah. In **BaMishmor**, Rabbi Horowitz wrote on May 7:

At the outbreak of the war when the holocaust descended upon Polish Jewry, putting an end to the Agudah movement (Poland was the sole stronghold of this party), the Mizrachi forgot its complaints against the leaders of the Polish Agudah who came here as war refugees, and did not attack and blame them as being responsible for the dimensions of the tragedy by keeping thousands and tens of thousands from coming to the Holy Land when it was possible

to do so. The Mizrachi and the Yishuv establishment must see matters in their proper light. This group is still small and its influence still limited. But the ways of falsehood and exaggerated are hidden from human eyes. And it will not be difficult for the Agudah to rally 'round its flag the unorganized and the bitter elements in the Yishuv who easily trust exaggerations and extremist criticism....If we regard this as beneath us and refrain from action, we may be too late.

It is a mitzva for us to wage war against the Agudah. The major burden of this war will fall upon the shoulders of Mizrachi. However, it has at its beck and call all the power of the Zionist movement, for it is a general Zionist-nationalist war.

Mr. L. editorialized in **HaTzofeh** of February 23:

There are factions and groups which make no impression on the Yishuv, which never did a single constructive thing. They did nothing constructive for settlement, and yet they have found a platform upon which to build up their group. They wish to build themselves upon the ruins of our nation. The leaders of these groups are using these unfortunate orphans to plow their first furrow in the public arena so as to plant and "find one-hundred fold" in Meah Shearim.

in a later editorial in **HaTzofeh** dated March 10, the same Mr. L. charged that "...the Agudah never dealt with raising and educating youth. It has no suitable place or atmosphere for developing and educating youth."

BaMishmor of May 7 stated:

The Mizrachi regards the Agudah and those who follow its factional policies which have been expressed publicly in many lectures and ideological essays and,

in particular, in everyday activity as people who have gone astray from the way of wholesome Judaism no less than the irreligious Zionists who have cast off the yoke of the Torah and its commandments.

Rabbi Yaakov Levy angrily attacked the Agudah in **BaMishmor** of June 24:

We know that in recent years many anti-Zionists have come to this land, among them great Torah scholars who, when they lived abroad, waged battle against us. They have come to us here only out of fear of the Nazis -- may they rot -- and I think that they too are responsible for much of our people's blood being spilled. And now they are doing everything in their power to increase divisiveness in Orthodox Jewry as they did abroad, and we remain silent and do not counter their plots.

These are illuminating examples -- a few from among hundreds more -- of the hatred that emanated from the Mizrachi press throughout the entire debate around the Teheran children. Not one of the nonreligious papers dared write in such a form about Agudath Israel.

The Mizrachi Madrichim on the Job

The Mizrachi **madrichim** who worked in the transit camps, with certain exceptions, were filled with the same blind-hatred of Agudath Israel that the Mizrachi press and its leaders revealed publicly and privately. Not only did they assist all the nonreligious **madrichim**, but they took it upon themselves to convince the children that Agudath Israel was not good for them and to tell lies of it and its institutions. There was a kind of division of labor among the **madrichim**. The nonreligious would take the children's minds off religion, and the Mizrachi **madrichim** would take the children's minds off Agudath Israel and the yeshivos. The innocent children trusted a religious

madrich, and soon Agudath Israel began to seem to them a monster, all of whose followers would be led down into the abyss. They began to view the yeshivos as havens for destructive and lazy people. The Agudah **madrich** in any camp found himself alone against dozens of nonreligious **madrichim** and educators. Hoping to find an ally in the Mizrachi **madrich**, he was greatly disillusioned when it turned out that the Mizrachi **madrich** was his most radical opponent.

Pinchas Biberfeld, the Agudah **madrich** in Mikveh Yisrael, reported that the Mizrachi **madrich**, Chanoch, and a group of youths from the Mizrachi Youth Aliyah who were studying in Mikvah Yisrael excelled at the "warm receptions" arranged there by the nonreligious **madrichim** for the pupils of the Agudah and Beth Jacob Schools when they came to visit the Teheran children. They even hit the visitors.

Naftali Guttman, a boy who lived at the camp in Mikveh Yisrael, reported that the Mizrachi **madrich**, Chanoch, told him that Agudath Israel was really responsible for the death of his parents because it prevented them from coming to the Holy Land.

Mrs. Deborah Shidletzky, an Agudah **madricha** in the camp at Magdief, said that when the camp opened, she proposed to the Mizrachi **madrich**, Yaakov Klosky of Tirat Izvi, that they work together. This was in the presence of Rabbi Plonchik of Mishnitz. She asked Klosky not to try to influence the children who wished to go to Agudah schools, while she would help him in his work with children who were subject to nonreligious influence. Klosky refused her offer categorically, stating that he was on principle opposed to Agudah education. This **madrich** gave all his attention to children who wished to join Agudah. This was taken advantage of by the other **madrichim**, who succeeded in transferring to leftist groups a number of the children who had originally leaned toward Mizrachi.

Avraham Frankel, one of the Teheran boys who was in Magdief, reported that Klosky spoke to the children against yeshivos, saying that yeshiva students were time-wasters and freeloaders. He told a boy named Horowitz that Agudath Israel was responsible for the death of his parents because it prevented them from coming to Palestine. To a boy named Hoch he said that if he would not go to the Mizrachi he would be better off choosing one of the leftist groups "which is building the land" rather than to go to the Agudah institutions "which are raising freeloaders."

Not far from K'far HaNoar HaDati, Mordecai Rottenberg met three girls who had been Beth Jacob students and had arrived via Teheran. They were then living in Yagur. Klosky was with them. Rottenberg urged the girls to leave Yagur and transfer to a religious institution. Klosky interrupted and protested, asking why he was implanting hatred toward Jews. Turning to the girls, he said, "It's better for you to stay in Yagur than to go to the Agudah. Now you are among the builders of the land."

According to Rabbi Zev Edelman of Petach Tikva, yeshiva boys who went to visit the children in the transit camp there were greeted with insults and stones. A Mizrachi **madrich**, Naftali of S'dey Eliyahu, also insulted the yeshiva students and called them "loafers." All this was done in front of the children. Naftali described the situation in the yeshivos to the children, telling them that the boys there sleep on the ground and wear rags, and that nice old ladies wander around the streets and gather crumbs of bread for them. When a party took place in the yeshiva for the children, almost all of the children went. Suddenly, the **madrich** Yehoshua of Beit Alfa and the aforementioned Mizrachi **madrich** showed up and ordered the children to return to the camp. The dean of the yeshiva, Rabbi Abba Grossbard, invited the two **madrichim** to his table and was

very friendly to them, but the **madrachim** turned down his invitation. "You kidnapped the children," they shouted. The yeshiva students asked, "Why should the yeshivas be worse than all the clubs of the various organizations to which the children are sent every night?" But they received no answer. The children were removed forcibly. The angry children threw stones at the two **madrachim**. Later, the children sneaked back in from the camp and spent the night with the yeshiva students at the rabbi's house.

The Youth Aliyah office consented, after prolonged negotiation, to permit an Agudath Israel **madrach**, Yosef Rosenberg, to work at Beit Tzeirot Mizrachi in Jerusalem. Rosenberg introduced himself to the Mizrachi **madrach**, Eliezer Stern of K'far HaNoar HaDati, who served as a coordinator at the camp in Beit Tzeirot Mizrachi. Stern refused to admit him and told him that the staff of **madrachim**, himself included, had unanimously decided not to permit an Agudath Israel member to share in the direction and instruction of the children. The Youth Aliyah office request was ignored. Moshe Shapiro, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, intervened, but his urgent request did not help. When he tried a second time, Rosenberg received the same reply from Stern, who added that even though it was difficult for him to cooperate with a **madrach** of HaShomer HaTzair, it would be seven times more difficult for him to cooperate with an Agudath Israel **madrach**. Two weeks later, Rosenberg tried again. He thought that the harmful effects of the influence of the nonreligious **madrachim** in winning many children away from religion would have opened Stern's eyes, and he would find it useful to have an additional religious **madrach** in the camp. Once again, he received an angry reception. Stern called the children together and said to them, "Some Agudahnik has come to kidnap you. Do you agree?" Rosenberg, approved as a **madrach** by the Youth Aliyah office, was compelled to leave a third time.

Rosenberg was present during an excursion for the children from the camp at Beit Tzeirot Mizrachi in Jerusalem. Near the train station in Jerusalem stands the ruin of a windmill built by Sir Moses Montefiore. This is how the **madrach** Stern explained the history of the windmill to the children: "In the old city in a number of neighborhoods there are people of the old Yishuv who seek to live on **schnorr** (begging), waiting for contributions of their rich uncles! Their work is to press the benches in the study halls and to curl their sideburns. They do not lift a finger for the construction of the homeland. Along comes Sir Moses Montefiore and builds a windmill so that these loafers can earn a living from their own work. His idea never reached fruition. These people hated work. It is much easier to do nothing but **schnorr**. And so the windmill fell into ruin. Today, though, we have kibbutzim that plow and plant and reap. Nowadays, a Jewish windmill would not fall into ruin."

In **BaMishmor** of May 7, 1943, Yitzchok Krakoski wrote in "Oneg Shabbat among the Teheran Children" of meeting a group of Teheran children near Tel Arza (in Jerusalem):

We conversed for awhile and my heart nearly broke when I saw a young boy who had come through Teheran, jumping with fury as if a snake had bitten him. Why?

At some distance from us, two sidecurled Jerusalem youths were sitting at the top of a hill, deep in conversation. This boy, who had come through Teheran and was "aged over 14", was upset at what his eyes had seen -- Jewish youths wearing sidecurls -- and this had caused his outburst. This youth could not calm down. He ran from one person to another and furiously pointed to the two "Jew-boys over there" who dared breathe the fresh air of the Jerusalem hills along with him.

I was incredulous. Soon the lad was standing next to me, screaming his head off against the two youths conversing so pleasantly at a distance from us. I asked the howler, "Do you know them?"

"Who, them? Those **schnorrers**, those parasites? Beis Medrishniks! Wastrels! Bench pressers!"

"How do you know that? It seems to me that this is the first time you've ever laid eyes on them. As for me, who had been living among these Jews in this country and in Jerusalem for some twenty years, they seem to be honest working men who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. Perhaps, in their spare time, they also study. So what if they have sidecurls? It's probably worth your while to walk over to them and to talk to them. They speak Yiddish as well as you, although I'm sure they speak Hebrew too, perhaps a very sweet and pleasant Hebrew."

"I, to them? To them?"

"Yes, to them. They're your brothers, perhaps even your relatives. On the day you arrived with the refugees from Teheran, they too rejoiced along with all the other people in the Yishuv, and they too wept warm tears for the wreckage of Jewry and for your sufferings until you came to us."

My daughter, a seventh-grader, stood speechless throughout this entire exchange. We returned home silent and anguished at this nightmare we had seen during our waking hours.

Yes, they gave these children **madrachim**. **Madrachim**, according to a political, kibbutz and organizational system that is "normal" among us.

It surely never occurred to Mr. Krakoski that this attitude

had been taught to the children by -- of all people -- the Mizrahi **madrachim**.

The Agudah **madrachim** had to fight a major war with the Mizrahi **madrachim** not only in matters of Jewish perspectives, but also in minor and major matters of Jewish law. Agudah **madrachim** kept quiet, and occasionally yielded to the Mizrahi **madrachim**, so as to avoid the devastating impression that might be made upon the children at the sight of differences of opinion among religious **madrachim** on matters of religion.

Mrs. Deborah Shidletzky, the **madricha** for Agudah Israel in Magdiel, requested that boys and girls be separated and given separate housing. The other **madrachim** were opposed. Yaakov Klosky, the Mizrahi **madrach**, also opposed her proposal. One Friday night, a dance was held to the accompaniment of an accordion. It was difficult for the **madricha** to protest this because the Mizrahi **madrach** was also dancing to the organ music on the Sabbath.

Yitzhak Zayeovsky, principal of the Talmud Torah in Magdiel, told of a party which took place in the Magdiel camp, attended by all the schools in the Sharon area. He asked Klosky why he had not seen to it that the local Talmud Torah also was invited to the celebration. Klosky replied, "They did not consider the participation of the Talmud Torah students desirable, for they would surely refuse to dance with the girls and that would make a bad impression on the children."

Rabbi A. Edelman of Petach Tikva reported: **Madrach** Yehoshua of Beit Alfa demanded of two children that they clean the toilet on the Sabbath. The children told him, "Let the one who puts out the lights on the Sabbath do the cleaning." Yehoshua replied that he himself was willing to do so on the condition that the Mizrahi **madrach**, Naftali of S'dey Eliyahu, accompany him. Naftali agreed. The two of them compelled

two more children to join them, and together they cleaned the toilet.

Mrs. Sarah Wein, a **madricha** for the Agudah in Hadera, said that several times she tried to take the children to pray in a local synagogue. The Mizrachi **madrach** opposed this with the excuse that the HaShomer HaTzair **madrachim** would use that as an excuse to take the children to visit their kibbutzim. As a matter of fact, the children visited Kibbutz HaShomer HaTzair Dated in Hadera every single night.

Mrs. Shoshana Feldman, Agudath Israel **madricha** in Achuza in Haifa, reported that the Mizrachi **madrach** opposed the children's praying in the local synagogue for fear of influence by outsiders (in other words, the influence of those who attended the synagogue). Since almost all the children in the transit camp were under 13, there was no possibility of arranging for public prayer in the camp itself, and throughout the entire period the children did not have an opportunity to say **kaddish**.

Avraham Mokotovsky, the Agudah **madrach** in Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, said that Yosef Wind, a Mizrachi **madrach**, in the presence of the children thanked the woman who washed the floor in his room on the Sabbath. This **madrach** agreed to take the children for a hike out of Jerusalem on March 22, (Purim in Jerusalem) even though, as a result of the hike, the children would not hear the reading of the Scroll of Esther because it had been read throughout the rest of the country on the day before. Wind claimed that he had asked Rabbi Uziel, and had received a dispensation from him. Mokotovsky inquired of Rabbi Uziel, and it became obvious that no such dispensation had ever been given.

Finally, testimony that Mr. S. Z. Moses took down from

Yaakov Mordechai Kelman, age 16, shows to what depths a Mizrachi **madrach** sank in order to influence a child:

The Youth Aliyah office arranged for me to be sent to K'far HaNoar HaDati. When I arrived, I discovered that in this place they do not give the kind of education my parents wanted. They wanted me to study in a Talmud Torah or in a yeshiva, and this place was neither. So I left and went to the big rabbis in Jerusalem. I asked them to put me into an Orthodox educational program as my parents wished, and they made the necessary arrangements for me. I traveled back to K'far HaNoar HaDati to get my belongings. They refused to give them to me. After screaming and crying, they finally gave me two of my most necessary garments; the rest of my things are still there.

When I wanted to return to Jerusalem, I waited for a letter that one of the children wished to send with me to a friend of his in Jerusalem. While I was waiting, one of the Mizrachi **madrachim** grabbed me, twisted my arms behind me, pushed me around, hit me on the stomach and the rest of my body and wounded me cruelly. I was sick in bed in Haifa for several days after that. There Dr. Gloskimos examined me and found wounds on my nose and my left arm; on my back and on my neck I had terrible pains as well as in my chest and on the upper joints of my hands whenever I moved them.

This was the cruellest treatment I received after all my years of wandering and being separated from my family — when I finally hoped to find peace in the Holy Land.

Here is an exact copy of the doctor's certificate:

Rafael Gloskimos, M.D.

HaTavor 13

Haifa

Today at 12:30 P.M. Yaakov Kelman, a boy visited me. I examined him and found the following:

1. The skin of his nose is swollen and red.
2. There are five slashes on his left arm.
3. On his back are signs of beating; the skin is red and swollen in five places. In several spots, the skin is peeling. The neck, too, has areas that are red with scratches.

He complains of pain in the chest, in the back, and with his breathing. In addition to this, he complains of pains in both upper arms when moving them. No damage done to bones.

Signed: Dr. R. Gloskimos

In view of the above facts, it is surprising to read in Rabbi A. Neufeld's article in **HaTzofeh** of May 3: "Our members tried and helped considerably to increase the number of Agudath Israel **madrichim**."

Mizrachi Education

Orthodox Jewry regards Mizrahi education as half or a third religious. Consequently, it regards the children handed over to Mizrahi institutions to be educated as half or more lost to Torah and to its observances. In the first chapter of this book, we saw that this was the general opinion of Orthodox Jews in Poland. Factually, however, even Mizrahi Leaders frequently expressed openly their concern for the religious levels in Mizrahi institutions.

In **The Spiritual Problems of Zionism**, Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel, a member of Mizrahi, expressed concern about the

effects of Mizrahi education because their graduates did not join the Mizrahi party. Also, the children in their schools looked up to national heroes and poets, but did not have similar regard for "the heroes of the spirit and the masters of our Torah." He held the Mizrahi itself responsible for the situation. He said,

There were times when the students in Mizrahi schools comprised 40% of all school children in the Yishuv. Today that figure has gone down to about 24%. What percentage of these people later remains in the Mizrahi movement?

A survey of all the youths in our ranks would reveal that almost all of them have recently arrived from the diaspora. Where are those raised in the Holy Land? There are in fact only several hundred members in Mizrahi's Bnei Akiva youth organization throughout the land, while the Mizrahi school system has graduated tens of thousands of pupils. Where are all of them?

"Insiders are destructive. Outsiders are not destructive." The public schools abroad did not hurt our schools too much; they were not of the same kind and had nothing in common. This is not true, however, for the Holy Land, where the "public" is also Jewish, and the "public schools" as well as the private schools are all part of a single educational network. Here the insiders are indeed destructive.

Our education is based on a superficial program, our small-mindedness: "The land of Israel for the people of Israel in accord with the Torah of Israel." The difference between us and the irreligious Zionists lies in the last seven words. But, regarding the first

two phrases, there is no difference of opinion between us, as if we could agree with them that we can give the land of Israel and the Jewish people a totally secular meaning. Our youngsters are trained from their earliest youth in the spirit of this superficial attitude which gives the misimpression that both the land and the people take priority over the Torah, which is a mere afterthought. This attitude harms our youngsters greatly.

In **BaMishmor** of January 31, 1941, Rabbi Amiel wrote of the conflict between religion and nationalism and called for a new philosophy to be put forth in Mizrahi schools.

In a further installment of this article in **BaMishmor** of February 14, 1941, he wrote:

Mizrahi's enemies surely exaggerated when they spread a rumor several months ago that on a questionnaire sponsored by a Mizrahi school the question, "Which course do you hate most?" was answered by "Talmud". Although this report is false, because Mizrahi pupils are not suspect of making such a statement in public, there is no doubt that many pupils really think so in their heart of hearts.

In **HaYesod** of June 12, 1942, Rabbi Amiel said that "the Mizrahi school is a school in the general sense like all secular schools with the sole addition of religion -- 'religious schools' and no more." He also criticized the attitude prevalent in Mizrahi schools, that the study of the Torah was not an intellectual discipline:

Is it necessary to explain that such a philosophy undermines the premises of the yeshivos? Is it necessary to explain that two diametrically opposed viewpoints cannot live together?

It is a fact, and it is useless to deny it, that

Mizrahi schools do not graduate pupils to yeshivos. Those pupils who do so are rare, genuine exceptions.

It is well-known -- no secret -- that those unique individuals born in the Holy Land who continue their studies in yeshivos are almost entirely the products of Talmud Torahs (religious elementary schools) that are in no way under Mizrahi influence; most of which, in fact, were established to counteract the local Mizrahi schools....

...It seems there is a deep-seated awareness -- although for obvious and not so obvious reasons it is never verbalized -- that all is not well in the Mizrahi schools. Those parents who plan to have their sons continue their studies in yeshiva for at least several years after graduating from elementary school are afraid to send them to Mizrahi schools.

"As water reflects so do hearts." There is a deep-seated hatred within the yeshivos and their administrations to the Mizrahi educational system. It is immaterial that Mizrahi members and leaders contribute to and support yeshivos, for at stake is not their money, but their children.

If in an area such as Kovno in Lithuania, whose population did not approach that of Tel Aviv alone, thousands of pupils studied in less advanced and more advanced yeshivos, while here the number is so limited, the reason is, "If there are no youngsters, there are no oldsters," and the Mizrahi bears the responsibility.

In **BaMishmor** of November 29, 1940, Fishman wrote:

Mizrahi education would be a big blessing to Jewry if the general schools would follow its policy and its curriculum. On no account is such an

education satisfactory for our youngsters whom we wish to educate and train for complete, wholesome Judaism.

In a sequel to his article, Fishman wrote in **BaMishmor** of December 13, 1940:

Our teachers (with rare exceptions), with all due respect to their pedagogic competence, are incapable of influencing our youngsters with faith or sanctity through their actions. They do not have the stubbornness that the **m'lamed** (religious teacher) of the old **cheider** had for protecting the treasures of the nation out of genuine love and faith. Our schools lack lofty spirituality. They lack a divine spark, an inner light -- sanctity is lacking. Our teachers do not succeed in fostering within the minds of our young people any great love for the Torah or any internal love for traditional Orthodox Judaism. And the reason is simple. Most of our teachers, despite their apparent religiosity, lack "love of Torah and fear of heaven." They utilize their Torah merely as a tool for earning a living, and their pupils know and sense this.

They observe everything their teachers do, even outside the school, and they know without any reservations that the teachers do not possess that pure faith and that deep love for the sacred treasures of the nation that they would like to inculcate in the hearts of their pupils. Step into the houses of the Mizrachi teachers and you will discover that many of them do not even have the Talmud on their shelves. You surely will not find in their homes Halacha works or works of Agada and ethics.

In another installment of this article in **BaMishmor** of December 27, 1940, Fishman continued:

In the educational program of the Mizrachi schools, too great a place is given to the knowledge of modern Hebrew literature. Just as our pupils must know some Bible and some Talmud, they are considered unfinished students if they cannot discuss intelligently the style of Frishman and the poetry of Bialik -- and that of Gordon as well. How painful and shameful it is if, for example (it is not really an example, but a fact), in our schools a refined Jewish girl must write an essay or discuss orally the content of the poem **Kutzso shel yud** by Y. L. Gordon which, rather than being poetry, pokes fun at and insults traditional Judaism in general and the greatest Jewish scholars in particular.

But this innocent Jewish girl, whose parents brought her to the Mizrachi school in order to train her religiously in the traditional Jewish manner, knows nothing of all this. Within the walls of the religious-nationalist school, she is obligated to study Gordon's poem, which makes fun of all that is sacred to Jewish tradition. He was a man who hated religious Judaism in the extreme and who even laughed devilishly at the "Lovers of Zion" organizations. From this poem of his, she absorbs and imbibes the recognition that a Jewish rabbi has a "Berber's soul and lacks a single one of the great traits of the holy Jewish people, the members of the covenant: he has no pity on Jewish money, he knows nothing about peaceful behavior, compassion is a stranger to him." And I ask our teachers and the supervisors of Mizrachi education: "Do you think that this poet, who insulted the innermost soul of Judaism, who was guided by his intense hatred and

loathing for traditional Judaism and its standard-bearers, can serve to introduce love for all that is sacred in Jewish tradition to our children?

Alongside readings in the Scriptures, we also introduce our children to works of Frishman; no distinction is made between the sacred and the profane. So, in the malleable minds of our pupils, the impression is created that this writer, too, is one of the mainstays of Jewish literature. And then he goes on to read -- whether instructed by his teachers or voluntarily -- Frishman's work *Bamidbar*, which is all insult and blasphemy toward the Torah of Moses, the master of all the prophets. And again I ask, "Do the Mizrahi teachers and supervisors believe that the works of this author (putting aside his ability as a writer), who more than frequently insulted Jewish tradition and our national beliefs, can serve to educate our sons and daughters in a nationalist and religious spirit? In a Jewish spirit or a traditional spirit?"

At long last, the supervisory board of the Mizrahi schools has granted a boon to our educational institutions and provided a textbook, *Trumot*, for 12-year-old students. What do we find in this textbook or reader? A childish kaleidoscope of sacred and profane without any distinction drawn between them at all. A short citation from *Midrash B'Keishit Rabah* next to a poem by Tchernichowski; a talmudic citation from Tractate *Ta'anit* alongside a poem by Avigdor HaMeiri; one from Tractate *Sukkah* with Shimonovitz; *Tana D'vey Elyahu* with Y. L. Gordon and Mapu; Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sasov with Burla (and Burla first!); and Maimonides with Asher Barash

and Sholom Asch -- all blended together without any boundary lines or markers. How much insult lies in this anthology toward the works of our earliest sages! How much ignorance and stupidity is revealed in this mish-mash!

In my opinion, the entire work -- all three volumes of it -- testifies to the poverty of our educational system. If 12- to 14-year-old students educated in a religious-nationalist school do not know the value of the Torah, of the Holy Land, of the Sabbath, and of the Jewish holidays as derived from talmudic and midrashic sources, but must learn this from fragments of Talmud and Midrash drowned in an ocean of poetry and belles-lettres written by our modern writers, this not only dramatizes the poverty of our educational system, but also demonstrates that it is a counterfeit. Religious-nationalist education, as originally conceived by its creators, was to have developed and derived its source of life from the roots for the literature which is purely religious-nationalist and whose authors were all loyal to Jewish faith and tradition. A religious education, a Torah education which has been uprooted from its original deep sources, is a counterfeit education.

Mr. Magen also criticized Mizrahi education in *Netiva*, the internal organ of HaPoel HaMizrachi (no. 6):

It is an open secret that Mizrahi education is spiritually on the down-path. For the past ten years, graduates of Mizrahi schools have not been turning what they were taught into practice. We find them in all the other youth organizations and federations; and in some instances they are even leaders within those groups. And the disease has already spread into the schools themselves. The influence of assorted youth

groups that stand outside of Orthodoxy and against Orthodoxy has reached within the schools. Some of the pupils of our Mizrahi high schools believe that their studying in schools of this type does not obligate them to be religious Jews. They must be careful not to desecrate the Sabbath in public. True religiosity is not even considered. How easy it really is to be a teacher in a Mizrahi school. There are no special obligations on the teacher. The yoke of the 613 commandments does not weigh particularly heavily upon him. It is enough for him to attend the synagogue once a week, and to avoid public desecration of the Sabbath.

Mizrahi leaders, despite knowing the condition of their educational system as well as its results, nevertheless had no inhibitions about undermining the efforts of Agudath Israel to absorb the children in its truly religious educational institutions. They were not at all worried about the moral responsibility they were taking upon themselves toward the children and toward their deceased parents, and they made every effort to take the children who requested wholesome religious education into their educational system.

The Mizrahi Youth Aliyah

What were the results of the education of Youth Aliyah children from Germany who were absorbed by the Mizrachi? Pinchas Rosenblitt discussed a meeting of Mizrahi **madrichim** which took place in K'far Pines in Elul 1941 in **Alim**, the organ of the Youth Aliyah administration (Tevet 1941):

The need for concern and for dealing properly with practical arrangements for the creation of an appropriate environment for individuals alone in the city was emphasized in view of the fact that most of

these loners have already deserted the religious framework of the movement.

Mr. Joseph Horowitz, in his book **Bog'rey Aliyat HaNoar** (Youth Aliyah Graduates), published by Youth Aliyah¹, asserted that the Mizrahi **madrichim** either did not know or did not wish to prevent the meeting of their youth with the nonreligious youth, and the education that they gave created the impression that joining a commune or a kibbutz is part of one's religious obligation. Thus, whoever refused to join a commune or a kibbutz saw himself as liberated from the obligation to fulfill the rest of the commandments of Judaism.

In the same book, the author provides statistics about the way of life chosen by the products of Mizrahi Youth Aliyah Education.²

	Boys	Girls	Total
In Kibbutzim	42.6%	26%	34.3%
"Loners"	54.5%	69.7%	62.1%

It should be pointed out that the Mizrahi Youth Aliyah graduates who joined nonreligious kibbutzim were included in the statistics for kibbutzim. As to the isolated individuals, we have the clear testimony cited previously from very reliable sources that most of them left the fold of Judaism. Thus, we have a very dismal picture of the percentage of Mizrahi pupils who remained Torah observers.

In contrast, let us note the direction chosen by those trained in the Agudath Israel Youth Aliyah programs. They were trained in three institutions: Kibbutz Noar Agudati in K'far Saba, Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim in G'dera and the Chorev dormitory in Jerusalem.

1. Jerusalem, 1942, 128 pages.

2. J. Horowitz, *Bog'rey Aliyat HaNoar* (Jerusalem, 1942, Youth Aliyah), p. 77.

In 1940-1941 at Kibbutz Noar Agudati, there were twenty-six youths in the Youth Aliyah framework, nineteen boys and seven girls. Eight of the boys went on to yeshivos, three joined religious militia units, seven remained in Kibbutz Noar Agudati, and one went off alone. Of the girls, five remained in the kibbutz, and two married out of the kibbutz. All of the graduates have remained members of Agudath Israel.

At Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim, there were twenty youths in the Youth Aliyah framework, thirteen boys and seven girls. Two of the boys remained on the kibbutz, three went independent, and eight went off to yeshivos. Of the girls, six remained in the kibbutz, one went independent. All are within the Agudah framework. In the Chorev dormitory, the first year (1940-1941) there were twenty-five youths in the Youth Aliyah framework, eighteen boys and seven girls. Eleven of the boys went to Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim, six to yeshivos, and one to the HaPoel HaMizrach unit in Mikveh Israel. Six of the girls went to Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim, one went independent.

Of the second cycle at the Chorev dormitory (1942-1943), there were twenty-three youths; eleven boys, and twelve girls. Four of the boys went to Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim, two are continuing at Chorev, three joined their parents, two are independents. Of the girls, ten went to Kibbutz Chafetz Chayim, one is continuing at Chorev, and one is independent.

Combining all the above figures, we arrive at the following percentages:

	Boys	Girls	Total
In Agudah Kibbutzim	42.4%	84.7%	63.5%
In Yeshivos	36.5%	---	---
Independent	21.1%	15.3%	18.2%

The following reports show the situation of Torah

I. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

observance within the Mizrachi Youth Aliyah framework. Tzvi Diamant, a Mizrachi *madrich*, wrote in *Alim* (Tevet 1941) in his article on Talmud study among the youth:

From experience, it has become clear to me that in many communes and kibbutzim they disdain Talmud study. There are places where they have made this study optional. This should be changed entirely. The Bible is not a sufficient source for our religion, and it certainly does not suffice for studying the practical aspects of the commandments that we must fulfill. It is almost impossible to find the connection between the observances and their first source, the Bible without the "Oral Torah" -- the Talmud.

Let us seek Halachic concepts that apply to all the important areas of our lives and reach practical conclusions. Through the study of Talmud we can demonstrate the development of Halachá by way of the authorities on the subject up to and including rare practical applications in the religious observance of our times.

If this is the educational program, it is no wonder that one of the youths wrote in a wall newspaper published by the youth groups of S'dei Yaakov, quoted in the *Youth Aliyah Book*:

Those members of our group who join Youth Aliyah bring with them very little knowledge of the Jewish sacred books and even the two years of the program do not fill the gap. The result is that our comrades come out somewhat religious in terms of keeping the commandments, but they remain ignoramuses for the rest of their lives, for they later have almost no opportunity to continue their studies.

I. By Brocha Habas published by Central Bureau for the settlement of German Jews in Palestine-Youth Immigration Bureau, Jerusalem. 504 pages, p. 418.

In Horowitz's book, **Bo'grey Aliyat HaNoar**, we are given statistics about the area of work chosen by Mizrachi Youth Aliyah graduates. Among all the areas they could have chosen, there is one that is not mentioned at all. That is the area of Torah -- the yeshiva -- chosen by 36.5% of Agudah's Youth Aliyah graduates.

Is the atmosphere in HaPoel HaMizrachi kibbutzim conducive to the full religious education of the youth? A member of Kibbutz Yavneh wrote on this subject in **BaMishmor** of March 9, 1942:

It is impossible to ignore the insolent attitude toward the fulfillment of commandments evinced by a number of our comrades which endangers our entire framework. It is an open secret that most of our efforts are directed at working to develop our land. Insofar as Torah is concerned, we are satisfied with quick, dry prayer sessions. A large segment of our public has unwittingly exchanged tradition for religion. There is an exaggerated attitude among us that promotes a humanistic moralistic perspective of religion. There is greater emphasis on the social values -- the "remaking of the world" -- than on the element of "the kingdom of G-d." The laws of the Torah are seen as means rather than goals, and all this leads to a weakening of the feeling of pure faith and to a degree of apathy toward the fulfillment of practical commandments. The individual behavior of each comrade serves as an educational example for those who follow him. Young comrades living within our framework who come in personal contact with those who fulfill the goals of our group are directly influenced by the actions of these people, much more than by any theories.

Joseph Kandler, who served for several years as a watchman in K'far HaNoar HaDati, reported details of religious life in the institution:

Only some of the **madrachim** participate in weekday prayers. On the other hand, on Shabbat boys and girls pray together in the same room and a mixed choir accompanies the prayer. The local rabbi's request to place a curtain or other divider between the boys and the girls during the prayers was turned down at a meeting of the **madrachim** on the basis that it "disturbed the social relationship." On Shabbat there are lectures given by guest lecturers, some of them nonreligious people such as members of Kibbutz Afikim or of Moshav Nahalal or Professor Martin Buber. A number of the boys walk around without their heads covered, the girls in shorts. Regularly, mixed ballroom dances for boys and girls are held on Saturday nights. Frequently, especially on Shabbat, they take walks to the nearby kibbutzim of HaShomer HaTzair-Shaar HaAmakim or Yagur -- with whom they maintain good relationships, in fact, close ties. Until the war broke out, they used to have great celebrations in honor of the first of May, and they used to celebrate the harvesting of the Omer on the night after the first day of Passover according to all the traditional details given in the Mishnah, reciting the blessing and invoking G-d's name.

Typical is the instance of a boy named Joseph Blumenkrantz, the son of a rabbi who was also an Agudah worker in Poland. The boy had studied at the yeshiva of Lomza in Poland. After Poland was captured by Russia, the boy, at the age of 13, left and studied in an underground yeshiva. Two years ago,

he came to the Holy Land and, at the demand of the HaPoel HaMizrachi representative, was assigned against his will to K'far HaNoar Hadati. The boy demanded that he be sent to a yeshiva, but the secretary of K'far HaNoar HaDati took all his documents and belongings, thus forcing him to go there. For a while, the boy sent letters to Hans Beit, director of the Youth Aliyah office, telling him that he had sworn an oath to study in a yeshiva. Mr. Beit answered him that after two years in K'far HaNoar HaDati he would be able to fulfill his oath. Under the influence of the *madrichim*, the boy turned out bad in a religious sense and stopped his studies. The boy is very gifted and his knowledge of the Talmud is very great.

Deciding the Goal

In his book *The Religious Problems of Zionism*, Rabbi M. A. Amiel wrote:

Upon its founding, the Mizrachi set itself a dual goal: "To influence the Orthodox Zionistically and to influence the Zionists with the Torah." At that time and in that place, in the city of Lida, there were hopes for the first half to take place as well as for the second half. In the course of time, the second half had disappeared entirely. The Mizrachi has given up on influencing Zionists through the Torah even though the Mizrachists do not wish to admit this in public. As to the first part, it is true that in the diaspora the Mizrachi did very much in that area; it did influence tens of thousands of the Orthodox not only to become Zionists in the Mizrachi version, but also without this version. The tens of thousands of Orthodox Jews for whom the Mizrachi served as a bridge to cross over

into the general Zionists and even into the leftist camp -- or more precisely for whom the Mizrachi served as a guideline to jump directly from one camp into the entirely antithetical camp -- their numbers are legion, countless. But all this applied only in the diaspora, for there their influence spread by arousing within these Jews the flame of their hidden love for Zion and Jerusalem. But there is no place for such arousal and such influence upon those who already live upon G-d's soil, who have returned to it after great sacrifice and suffering. So the Mizrachi is now in a hopeless situation. Its stated goal is completely unfeasible and it has nothing left to do. With time on its hands, it is going crazy.

But the Mizrachi found a cure for its boredom. For the orphaned immigrant children, the Mizrachi resumed its old diaspora custom. For them it indeed is serving as "a bridge to cross over into the general Zionist camp and also into the leftist one" -- or more precisely, it is serving them as a guideline for jumping directly from the camp of Torah observers into the camp of Torah forsakers. Agudath Israel is regarded by the Mizrachi as a stumbling-block in these efforts, and it seeks to push this stumbling block aside by any means that come to hand.

Chapter VI The Transit Camps

From Atlit the children were sent on February 23, 1943 to the transit camps. Youth Aliyah made the following statement public:

The office for Youth Aliyah attached to the Jewish Agency wishes to address the public with a request for assistance concerning these hundreds of immigrant children who recently arrived from Teheran. These children, 733 in number, have been placed in eleven camps, three in and around Jerusalem, one in Tel Aviv, one in Petach Tikvah, one in Haifa, one in K'far HaNoar HaDati, one in Magdiel, one in Mikveh Yisroel and one in Ayanot near Nes Tziyona. They will spend from four to, at most, six weeks in these camps. The purpose is the carrying out of inquiries by responsible authorities to make possible the ultimate determination of the exact place where each child will find his home. The second goal is to allow their relatives presently dwelling in Palestine the opportunity to meet them under normal circumstances. For this reason, we have set days and hours for visits by the relatives. However, we do not have the proper facilities to permit the general public entry into these camps....

The procedure in the camps, which are imperative so that those responsible for the children should be able to fulfill their obligations would be upset by the masses coming to visit the camps. It would be best to leave alone those who have found their way to this shelter.

This request of ours to the public is an expression of our special responsibility toward our young

refugees so that, for their benefit, opportunity will be given to those who deal with them to fulfill their sacred obligations without disturbance. We have full trust in the public that it will understand the spirit of this request of ours and will fulfill its intent.

Henrietta Szold

We shall soon see how the responsible people fulfilled "their sacred obligations," and what were the conditions and the framework that Youth Aliyah established for their work.

At a press conference, Mrs. Szold reported (Hegeh of June 11, 1943):

In the camps there were twenty-eight Mizrahi **madrichim**, six of Agudath Israel, eleven who followed the golden mean, and thirty-nine who were irreligious. The children studied Hebrew. There was great understanding toward the study of the language. Despite the demands of Agudath Israel, there were no sacred studies in the transit camps because the children were not yet fit for that.

Of the eleven camps, five were leftist camps, one belonged to the General Zionists, two were unaffiliated, and three belonged to the Mizrahi. Without visiting the places Agudath Israel had prepared for transit camps, the Youth Aliyah office denied all the Agudah proposals. They did not certify even one single Agudah camp, nor did they give any reasons to explain their behavior. Understandably, the institution in which each transit camp was housed, by its very character and nature, influenced the children living there.

Of the eighty-four **madrichim** and approximately eighty other staff members assigned to the camps, only five Agudath Israel **madrichim** were chosen for the following camps: Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, Mikveh Yisrael, Magdiel, Achuzah in Haifa and K'far HaNoar HaDati. It should be pointed out

that in the institutions in Magdiel, in Mikveh Yisrael, in Ayanot, in K'far HaNoar HaDati, in ChaVat Limud and in Beit Tzeirof Mizrahi had dozens of boys and girls of the same age as the Teheran children studying there who had greater influence on the children than the **madrichim** did. Against the five Agudah **madrichim**, there were hundreds of other people who influenced the children. The organized institutions all worked in unison against Agudath Israel. This unified front -- from HaShomer HaTzair to Mizrahi -- had already been established in a speech given by Mrs. Szold at a meeting of **madrichim** two days before the children arrived in Tel Aviv. Rabbi Kalman Kahane reported that at this meeting, Mrs. Szold described the negotiations with Agudath Israel in a manner which incited the **madrichim** against Agudath Israel. All five Agudath Israel **madrichim** were given only the youngest children to deal with. Of course, not one of them was appointed to be the coordinating **madrich** who would make decisions affecting the education or technical matters. The camps opened under conditions of inequality, with six of the camps having no Agudath Israel **madrich**, and no influence of Agudath Israel was allowed in.

The Children upon Arrival

In order to determine the degree of influence in a religious sense, that the transit-camps had upon the children, it is enough to point out the differences in their perspectives and behavior from the day they entered the camps until the day they stepped out. In Chapter 7, we shall cite instances of specific children whom we shall mention by name. In this chapter we shall deal with matters in a general way.

Ha'Aretz of March 7, wrote of an incident which took place in Petach Tikvah:

Two days ago, Teheran children in the camps in Petach Tikvah took a walk through the streets. As

they passed the Yeshiva of Petach Tikvah, fifteen of the children burst into the yeshiva and approached the deans with a request to accept them as students. They prayed **mincha** together with the rest of the yeshiva. After Rabbi Aharon Katz, a dean of the yeshiva, assured them that any time they would return to the yeshiva they would be accepted the children left.

Yediot Acharonot of February 23, also discussed the religious expression of the children upon their arrival:

Many, many of these children who arrived from Teheran were educated in the traditional manner. Their major happiness at arriving here was that here in their homeland they would be able to continue without disturbance to live according to the Torah of their forefathers. In Jerusalem, before eating their first meal, they already requested to pray and to say **kaddish** after their martyred parents. Many, many of them must say **kaddish**. There were little ones whose first request was, "Teach me how to say **kaddish**."

The official organizations are considerate of this -- so far. In Meshek HaPoalot in Tel Aviv, there was a lot of preparation. They made all the pots in the kitchen kosher so that everything could be properly kosher. They even put **mezuzot** on all the rooms of the building before the children arrived.

One of the children who was told about this wondered uncomprehendingly, "Before we came here, weren't there any **mezuzot** in Tel Aviv?" **HaMashkif** of March 1 reported:

The group that was brought to Petach Tikva were almost all Agudah members, and they are surprised that they are being fed leftist ideology.

The forty-three children in Beit HaChalutzot in Petach Tikva to "convalesce" are being fed communism day and night. The children are not allowed out to visit unless they are accompanied by **madrichim** — lest the evil eye befall them. Some of the children who asked to attend the Agudah youth club were not permitted to do so. On the other hand, the **madrichim** had a party for them in a "neutral" place — the Gordonia Club, at which instance they explained to the children that the best and easiest place for them to go would be to kibbutzim. Those of the children who wished to express a contrary opinion were not allowed to do so.

HaYesod of March 5, wrote:

Our Petach Tikva correspondent informs us about the arrival of Teheran children to the synagogue on the day of mourning and fasting last week.

It was a shocking, heartrending experience when, at the end of the prayers, the "freshly redeemed" children came to the synagogue and ran with frightening shouts to the Holy Ark where they wept for a long time. This shocking scene of cries and groans in the synagogue turned the scene into a terrifying experience. From the day Petach Tikva was founded, such miserable weeping has not been heard. The children asked the rabbi to have some fringed shawls and pairs of phylacteries purchased for them. Immediately the yeshiva students present volunteered either to provide or raise the money to fulfill the children's request.

Pinchas Biberfeld, a **madrich** in Mikveh Yisroel for Agudath Israel, wrote in **HaDerech**:

Considerate of their weak bodies, we commented:

whoever wishes to eat something before praying may do so. For the most part, the answer was, "We starved for weeks on end. We can wait until after the prayers."

The tyrant of our generation could not prevail over the will to live of these children. So it was written and sealed. After all the horrible experiences, the child's soul is still opened to receive impressions of the Jewish experience. "I haven't had such a Sabbath in four years," said a child of 14. Another burst into tears because he does not yet know how to pray. And yet another from a nonreligious home wishes to learn Hebrew in order to pray. He comes to the **madrich** and he tells him about the powerful impression that the words "the great and powerful and awesome G-d" made upon him when he read them for the first time.

The child's soul has not yet been able to assimilate all the assorted impressions and strange experiences that conflict with one another. The very children who went through experiences that would have taken away from any adult his faith in any moral world order, listens intently to the tales of King David and of the Messianic King. And one of them says to you, "How did I get here? An angel brought me." And all this without the least exaggeration.

HaTzofeh of February 22, reported further on the children:

Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem: Many of the children ask if the food here is kosher and if Jews may eat it. One of the children asked as soon as he got out of the car if the Rebbe of Ger lives in Jerusalem. The children were given rooms and, after a snack, went down to pray. All the children participated. In **Beit**

us, and they would feed us during the night while we were sleeping. G-d guarded our feet and kept us from stumbling. He cured all of our ailments and sicknesses. The merit of our martyred parents stood by us to arrive here today physically whole. If the Yishuv in the Holy Land could have witnessed all the miracles and wonders that have taken place with us, if it could sense tangibly the individual divine guidance so full of mercy and generosity that we sensed, it would behave differently and would not lightly desecrate all that is sacred to Jewry."

In HaMashkif of April 5, Mr. A. Klosky reported impressions from a visit arranged by United Jewish Appeal for newsmen. Among other points, he stated:

The children's religiosity is one of the obvious manifestations of their behavior. As the **madrichim** explained things, in conversations with the children themselves, (very brief conversations, by the way, because no opportunity was provided to carry on any lengthy conversation with them) they emphasized the devotion of the children to religious values. Let it be said in praise of the **madrichim** in the leftist kibbutzim and members of the Meshek HaPoalot in Chadera that they did not deny this fact, and consequently, they were able to place in a proper perspective the shameful behavior of the HaShomer HaTzair **madrichim** in Teheran and on the way to the Holy Land. The HaShomer HaTzair newspaper writes brazenly that only 14 children of all those aboard ship wished to pray. But in the presence of a HaShomer HaTzair **madrich** in Chadera, it was reported that all of the younger children in the camps prayed, and most of the older ones as well. He did not

Tzeirot Mizrachi in Jerusalem: All the children aged 12 to 14 were wearing new skullcaps they had received in Atlit. A while after arrival, the children went down to pray **mincha** and **ma'ariv**. The great number of those who said **kaddish** for their parents was shocking. In **ChaVat Limud in Jerusalem:** Many of the children expressed a request to say **kaddish** for their parents, and many of them requested that they be taught how to say **kaddish**.

HaTzofeh of February 28, wrote:

The prayer of the Teheran children in the Yeshurun Synagogue: Those who know how to read prayed enthusiastically themselves, and the others were aided by the **madrichim** and by some of the congregants. The children's faces upon which are still engraved shock and suffering, were full of joy and pleasure at the pleasant attitude of all those present. When the Torah scroll was taken out, the children stormed the passageway and kissed the scroll many, many times as their little sisters upstairs waved and threw kisses from the distance.

Avraham Rhine told the following story, which was reported in **HaDerech** of March 5 in an article by Moshe Shonfeld:

This past Sabbath the bar-mitzvah of one of the Teheran boys was celebrated in the yeshiva in Petach Tikva. All of the children in the transit camp in Petach Tikva participated in the prayers and in the party that followed. One of the children spoke in the name of his peers as follows: "In the course of our years of wandering, we grew used to miracles, the miracles that accompanied us every step of the way. At night we went to sleep hungry, in the morning we rose satisfied. G-d commanded angels to take care of

even attempt to contradict it. It was from the mouth of one of the workers of the leftist Meshek HaPoalot in Chadera that we heard shocking but deeply stirring descriptions of the deep religious feeling of the little ones. They loathed the nonkosher food and cannot imagine that it is possible to eat it. Even the children who expressed willingness to make their own homes in leftist kibbutzim, as a result of the influence of their **madrichim**, do not really imagine that they will be "poisoned" there with nonkosher food and that they will be compelled to forego the religion of their forefathers. One of the little ones, when he came into the camp and found a **mezuzah** on his doorpost, had tears in his eyes from joy. "Now I can sleep in peace," he said. When he was asked to explain his comment, he said that for many months he had not been able to sleep well at night because he had been living in a building where there was no **mezuzah**.

This religious sensitivity of the children, the result of their education in the homes of Orthodox parents, was consolidated by the supernatural heroism and dedication with which their parents in Russia fulfilled the religious requirements. There are tales that add glorious lines to Jewry's chain of self-sacrifice for G-d's sake. Eternally engraved on the heart of a child is the behavior of his father, a local judge, who died by degrees from day to day because he refused to contaminate himself with forbidden food. Although nonkosher food was available only in quantities that forced people to starve slowly, he refused to derive any benefit from those few crumbs, until he ultimately died in sanctity. Or take the child who saw his father fall to the ground while chopping trees in the woods,

who watched him die for lack of strength, and then ran 16 kilometers in the freezing cold in order to bring a prayer shawl to wrap his father's body in accord with Jewish law. Is there any power in the world that would sway him from his loyalty to the Torah? These instances of sanctifying G-d were not isolated instances, and they made their deep impression on the children.

In **HaTzofeh** of April 2, the reporter Shin, who participated in the same trip, related the following:

According to the many notes that we collected as a result of fragments of conversations, stories and memories, it turned out that most of the children in the place are from religious homes. When the children speak naturally, it is easy to recognize their background. For example, one child sits and tells us naively that when they were in the forest of Siberia, his father used to rise before dawn, before working time, and rush off to one of the nearby huts, where Jews would gather and pray the morning prayers secretly with decorum. A second child relates: In the morning his father would spread a sheet across the windows and would don his phylacteries and pray. On Sabbath days he would run off into the deep forest in order to avoid working on the Sabbath. One child habitually woke up in the middle of every night, would go and stand at the prayer stand in the synagogue and whisper verses of **kaddish**. It was recognizable that some shocking incident had upset him deeply. Finally, he told his story, "When my father died of hunger, I ran 16 kilometers to a settlement of refugees where I received a prayer shawl in which I wrapped my father and buried him." That

horrible experience was still alive in him day and night: the dead father whom he had buried alone and for whom he had said the first **kaddish** at his solitary grave in the steppes: the race for the prayer shawl — all of this had made a deep impression on his soul and his lips kept whispering, "Yisgadal v'yiskadash shmeih raboh."

A **madricha**, a member of a leftist kibbutz, confirms the fact that most of the children are the sons and daughters of parents who kept the Torah and its commandments. Immediately upon their arrival, they showed great fervor in the fulfillment of the Torah. She rationalizes the phenomenon as a hunger for that which was forbidden to them before. She compared their desire for prayer and for keeping the Sabbath, to recite **kiddush** and **havdalah**, to a physical desire that burst forth when they arrived — for salt. "Throughout their wanderings, they suffered from a deficiency of salt, and they were not permitted to keep the Torah. As soon as their deficiency was filled, the hunger disappeared. They stopped eating salt, and they also lost their enthusiasm for keeping the Torah." Her explanation need not be accepted, but her statements reveal the nature of the children. The question of kosher and nonkosher food is something they do not understand. How many times have they said, "How can you be a Jew and live in the Holy Land and eat nonkosher food?" This phenomenon seems to them unnatural, like a flood, a storm, a volcanic explosion. So it is with the Jewish child who is in captivity among gentiles where he is compelled to eat everything, but retains his innocence. Upon his arrival in the Holy Land, he sees

kosher food as a natural part of his existence. Just as his body heals and his soul is refreshed, so is his traditional experience revived. One child tells of his father, a chassidic Jew who died of hunger in Uzbekistan because he refused to eat nonkosher food. Nonkosher food they regard as one of the horrors of their exile along with hunger, slave-labor, wanderings and beatings. Can any part of this cruelty exist in the Holy Land?

The children are in the habit of kissing the **mezuzah** before going to sleep at night. Their memories retained this custom from their parental homes. And when they recall the tribulations they and their parents suffered, when they recall the days they were exposed to every cruel whim -- their desire for the **mezuzah** increases. "Here in our rooms we are not afraid to sleep, because there's a **mezuzah** nailed to the doorpost."

At first the children defended themselves against the influence of the **madrichim** as much as they could. Rabbi Zev Edelman related an incident involving the children sent to Beit HaChalutzot in Petach Tikva: Madrich Yehoshua of Beit Alfa turned off the lights in the dining room on Friday night (the Sabbath eve), while the children were singing Sabbath songs. One of the children got up and pronounced, "He who turns off lights on the Sabbath, let his hands shrivel!" And all the children together responded, "Amen." Yehoshua replied, "Let us see if your curse will affect me." The next day Yehoshua became sick, and the children took it as a divine sign.

Mr. Dziadoszinski, a student at the Chevron Yeshiva, testified that at Chavat Limud in Talpilot (Jerusalem) a **madricha** demanded that a girl sew on the Sabbath. The girl

refused. She tried to persuade her, but the girl remained firm. Finally, the **madricha** said to her, "You'll slowly get used to not keeping such nonsense."

Mrs. Shedlitzky, the Agudath Israel **madricha** in Magdiel, reported that one Sabbath morning a **madrich** ordered one of the girls to wash the floor. The girl absolutely refused. She later complained about him before a general talk and the **madrich** had to apologize.

Mssrs. Nisan Turczin and Seidman of Jerusalem reported that in Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem a **madrich** ordered the boys to remove their hats during their first supper there. One of the boys stood up to him and said, "We are not in Teheran. We are now in the Holy Land. We will not remove our hats."

Policy -- in Theory and in Practice

Youth Aliyah declared as its policy that the Sabbath would not be publicly desecrated in the transit camps. Here are some additional facts that show how well the Sabbath was kept in the camps.

In **HaTzofeh** of May 6, Mr. Shim wrote in an article headlined, "In Response to Defenders":

A **madrich** related, "More than 20 children participated in the Sabbath prayers. The majority seemed elevated by the prayers. The camp was supposed to conform to a religious regimen in accord with regulations. But other factors -- the girls in the school who belonged to all sorts of secular movements, the cars coming and going, the telephone ringing, visits by all sorts of people smoking openly in the children's presence on the Sabbath in the dining room or in the play yard -- had a negative influence on the religious form the office had decided to impose."

HaPoel HaTzair of March 11, admitted that at the agricultural school in Talpiot the Sabbath singing was accompanied by instruments (forbidden by Jewish law), but justified it by declaring:

The hosts sought to dissipate somewhat the horrors of the Nazi voices still ringing in the children's ears by playing some pure music for them.

Mr. Kaufman of Jerusalem reported that on Friday night, February 27, a dance was held in the above camp with music supplied by a piano.

Mrs. Shoshana Feldman, the Agudath Israel **madricha** in Immigrant House in Ahuza-Haifa, reported: "On the Sabbath they heated up the children's food (forbidden by Jewish law). When I objected, they replied that they lacked the technical facilities for keeping food warm from the day before. The children were not aware of this. One girl who became aware of this lodged a protest. Also the nonreligious **madrichim** put on the lights in the children's presence."

Mr. Avrohom Mokotovsky, the Agudah **madrich** in Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, reported that the **madrichim** put on and doused the lights on the Sabbath in the children's presence. Mrs. L. Cohen and Mrs. K. Oppenheimer, who worked as volunteers in the kitchen in Beit HaChalutzot, report that the gas was lit in the kitchen before the Sabbath but that it was turned off at night. On the Sabbath day milk was cooked for the girls; the cook smoked in the kitchen on the Sabbath; and the floors of the institution were washed on the Sabbath.

Rabbi Shlomo Margalit testified that in the transit camp in Petach Tikva the **madrichim** took the children to the Gordonia Club and smoked, in front of them on their way there.

According to Mrs. Szold's declaration, cited at the beginning of this chapter, the **madrichim** were obligated not to permit the

public -- with the exception of relatives -- to visit the children. In fact this instruction was implemented only regarding Orthodox Jews. Mr. Rosenberg testified that members of HaNoar HaOveid (Working Youth -- irreligious) were able to enter Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem undisturbed to take children from there to the HaNoar HaOveid clubhouse. In contrast, Rabbi Hillman, Rabbi Herzog's father-in-law was not allowed to visit the children.

Rabbi Zev Edelman of Petach Tikva reported that the girls also wanted to attend the *bar-mitzva* celebration of one of the boys at the yeshiva in Petach Tikva. The *madrichim* did not consent and forcibly removed the girls and took them on a trip to Kibbutz Giv'at HaSh'losha. When Rabbi Herzog went to visit the children at the transit camp in Petach Tikva, *Madrich* Yehoshua of Beit Alfa refused to admit him, claiming that the rabbi might "tire the children who are so needy of rest." Rabbi Edelman told the children that Rabbi Herzog had come, and they immediately gathered in the office to greet him.

Yisroel Shadmi reported that at the camp in Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem they made sure not to permit entry to men whose heads were covered. Especially scrupulous were *Madrich* Yehoshua and *Madricha* Feiga. On the other hand no attempt was made to restrain bareheaded men.

Mrs. Soloveitchik of Jerusalem reported that on the Sabbath of Parshass Tazria several Orthodox Jews wished to visit their relatives at the Agricultural School in Talpiyot, but the *madrichim* chased them away with stones and clubs.

Rabbi Pinchas Biberfeld, the Agudah *madrich* in Mikveh Yisroel reported that the guard there was instructed to chase away all "the Agudath Israel visitors" -- with a club, if necessary. As a matter of fact, on horseback he chased after Orthodox visitors with the children watching, thus turning the visitors into a laughingstock. In contrast, members of Working

Youth were allowed to enter and to influence the children. They ignored the fact that Adek, the Christian Polish apprentice, played with the boys and took them to Tel Aviv in the company of immoral people. He took a boy named Yitzchak Hagler, who originally belonged to the Agudath Israel circle, to Tel Aviv several times and brought him back drunk. Working Youth members would teach the children bicycle riding on the Sabbath. Once, during a Sabbath party, some of the Working Youth members induced some of the children to step into the gym where they arranged their own "Sabbath party" with cigarettes and instrumental music. A *madrich* named Mordecai Yoffe explained that that was the way to prepare them "for real life" in Palestine. At this same gathering a skit was presented in which an Orthodox Jew was portrayed as a negative, laughable character.

The Orthodox community of Jerusalem influenced the children indirectly. At the sight of every old-type Jew, the children would recall memories of the past; images of parents and grandparents would be stirred up anew along with their yearning for a traditional atmosphere where fear of G-d reigns as it did in their own homes. This led Youth Aliyah to transfer the transit camp from Jerusalem to Nahalal. The execution of this decision was prevented partially by the last-minute protest of the Agudath Israel leadership; but primarily because there was not enough room in Nahalal. Rabbi Moshe Blau wrote about this plan in *Kol Yisroel* of March 4:

It became known that Youth Aliyah had decided to transfer the children from Jerusalem to Nahalal.

At first we refused to believe our ears. From Jerusalem! To Nahalal! Not from anywhere else to Nahalal, nor from Jerusalem to anywhere else. When we inquired we discovered that, to our shame and that of the entire Jewish settlement in Palestine, the report

was true and the reason for it is because in Jerusalem "the atmosphere is poisonous", there are "disturbers of the peace." Yeshiva students, Agudah Youth members and Bais Yaakov girls are crowding around the camps and establishing too much contact with the children. Do not think, "with all the children." Only with the children who were their classmates in Poland.

Should you ask, "What sin did Jerusalem commit for which it became imperative to transfer the children to Nahalal?" Here are some sample "sins":

A **madrich** led a group of Teheran children on a tour of Jerusalem's antiquities. He showed them David's Tower, the Old City Wall and Robinson's Arch. They finally arrived at the Western (Wailing) Wall, where he told them, "This wall is about 2,000 years old. It is 11 meters tall, each stone is a meter long, and some are 2 meters long. There are six rows of stones above ground and nine more below." And he started to lead them away. A Jerusalem youth interrupted, "disturbing the peace," and said, "Children, this is the Western Wall which remained after the destruction of the Holy Temple. This is where all the Jews come to pray and pour out their hearts to G-d."

The children suddenly turned back to the Wall and fell upon its stones and wailed. They requested psalters and poured out all the tragedy accumulated in their little hearts from the day they had left their martyred parents' homes.

A second, less shocking instance: A **madrich** demanded that the children remove their hats while eating. A "disturber of the peace" who was there told

the children that in the Holy Land no one is obligated to remove his hat during meals.

Other "disturbers of the peace" took some of the boys to show them a yeshiva. The children sat down in the yeshiva to study for a while and were "caught in the act" by a **madrich**.

Because of these and similar "sins", the Jewish Agency Executive could no longer bear it and decided to transfer the children from the poisonous atmosphere in Jerusalem to the pure air of Nahalal. They wished to sunder them from all ties with the Jews and the atmosphere of Jerusalem. They would see nothing worse than the nonkosher butchering and eating of rabbit and camel meat. There they would see plowing, cooking and laundering done on the Sabbath. There they would be safe from the "poisonous" influence of "disturbers of the peace"—the yeshiva students of Jerusalem.

The **Madrachim** on the Job

Closing the transit camps to the public could not serve as an adequate guarantee that influence and propaganda would be kept from the children because the **madrachim** themselves saw their major task as "winning the souls" of the children. Every political group that got ahead of the others in the number of its **madrachim** and in entrenching its position succeeded to a greater degree. Mr. Shin wrote of his impressions on an official press tour of the transit camps conducted by the Jewish National Fund, in **HaTzofeh** of April 2:

It is questionable whether the transit camps with their staffs of **madrachim** from all political orientations helped attain an objective balance. On the contrary. True, the public was kept from the children, but the counselors are social beings, too.

And each of them frequently drew a child to his side. It is difficult to be neutral in this matter, especially in the peppery political climate of Palestine.

In *HaBoker* of April 14, Mr. Y. Z. wrote:

Here are some descriptive lines about the children and how they were trained -- written not by a one-time visitor, but by a *madricha* writing normally to her friends. Her words confirm our assumptions and conclusions. She is a young *madricha* in one of the camps and comes from kibbutz *Ashedot*. Her letter was published in the kibbutz newsletter (13 April 1943):

"The children are not at all easy to educate after all they have gone through. They are intellectually developed beyond their age and are far behind in physical development. They know life better than many grownups. And to train them is not simple at all. They trust no one nor can they always be trusted....They do not yet understand the positive aspect of work as we do, and their attitude to work differs from ours. I succeeded in explaining to them that I'm not a propagandist, that I'm just concerned for them. In truth, they have been overstuffing with propaganda. Propagandists of sundry circles come to them (as they did in Teheran and on the way to Palestine), bother them a lot, and try by any means and any tricks to draw these poor children into their organizations and federations. I, of course, tell them a lot about the kibbutz, but not as propaganda, because I really believe with my whole heart that the best place for them is the kibbutz.

"A large number of the older boys are Orthodox, although some of them are not Orthodox. But the

character of the camp as a whole is certainly religious, because that's the way they are operating it.

"I explained to the girls that the best thing for them would be to go to the kibbutz for training -- to study and to work -- and, when they grow up, if they like the kibbutz they can stay; if not, they can leave. And they understood that perfectly. The quarrel with the religious people is a separate affair. Under their influence they regarded the kibbutz with great hatred. They told them that the kibbutz is a *kolchoz*, which they loathe terribly because they were set to forced labor in *kolchozes*. Recently, their attitude towards us has undergone a change for the better.

"It is impossible that everything that was written and told and known to hundreds of eye-witnesses was not known to our official leadership. It's just that they are closing their eyes to the public scandal and thus becoming accomplices. We are very sorry Mrs. Szold's name is being abused in this affair. It is very sad that she has not had the courage or physical strength to stop the soul-hunt at least with the same vigor she has to yell at the public and to demand from all of us to leave the unfortunate children alone."

Mr. Klaus, who represented *HaMashkif* during the tour of the camps, wrote on April 5:

The *madrichim* themselves see and admit that the unclean party dance around the souls of the little ones is harming them. "A great wrong is being done to the children, a crime," a leftist *madrich* said with surprising frankness. And he added, "Not one of us is innocent, not one of us stands outside this mess." But his colleagues are unlikely to draw the obvious conclusions. They are ready to deceive even

themselves and even to promise the children a religious education -- anything so as not to forego their prey.

The way the **madrichim** worked was twofold. First, they uprooted the children's religious feelings; then they offered them all sorts of attractions to choose from among the variety of politically-affiliated kibbutzim. The **madrichim** regarded all means as legitimate.

Pinchos Biberfeld, the Agudath Israel **madrich** in Mikveh Yisroel, reported that **Madricha** Tamar of Ashdot Yaakov, who dressed immodestly, told the children about the advantages of mixed showers for men and women, customary in the leftist kibbutzim, in order to attract them.

Rabbi Kalman Kahane reported that in the transit camp in Magdiel the **madrich** told the boys, "Go inside to the girls and play with them. They're sad."

Systematically the children were led to "enjoy", in order to win them over and to give them a taste of the "good life" awaiting them in the kibbutzim. Avraham Mokotovsky, an Agudah **madrich** in Beit HaChalutzot (in Jerusalem) reported in an article in **HaDerech** (No. 31):

The **madrichim** who worked (with the children) in Teheran were instructed to use force against the children in order to accelerate the process of their "adaption" as much as possible. The policy of force preyed on the children's weakness and loneliness and assumed a natural influence in exchange for "being good" to them. But they miscalculated. The children were not influenced much by their **madrichim**. Their past in Russia protected them, for they were repelled by the war against religion there, and they were also conditioned to resist force.

When the children were finally about to embark for Palestine, still as stubborn as ever, the failure of this policy was recognized and they began to make new plans here. The kibbutzim were instructed to provide the best people to serve as **madrichim** here in Palestine. Those people were called together before the children arrived and were handed a fully-detailed program to carry out in the camps. Its main points were: not to antagonize the children's religious feelings; to "swallow" outbursts against the **madrichim** to grant the children all their whims; to arouse and gratify them with all sorts of amusement and fun -- singing, trips, parties, movies, plays, balls, etc.; to minimize studies and tell as many stories as possible about kibbutz life; and to show them kibbutzim. All this was not geared primarily to the children's well-being and recuperation, but to make them "soft" so they should prefer convenience and wealth to other things.

Life in the camp followed the instructions. There was no trace of discipline or order. A child did as he pleased -- broke chairs, chipped walls, damaged furniture, and generally raised hell -- and no one said a word to him. He cursed his **madrichim** and insulted those who supplied his needs, and all silently accepted their insults. He behaved like a spoiled brat in the kitchen and spoke with chutzpa in the clothing storeroom -- to a degree that no mother would have tolerated, but here it was acceptable. The children were begged to do this or that, as if they were the benefactors rather than the reverse. There was no sign of studies; even for the study of Hebrew there was neither place nor time. The whole day was devoted to celebration and joy. Every night, parties

and dances. There were cases where children went to the movies three times in one day. If there was some impediment in the way, the other **madrichim** on the spot would remove it. They made the boys "kindergarten teachers" to play with the little girls. The older ones were allotted to "our kind of people." When I asked one of the staff, "How do you allow yourself to corrupt children permanently?" he replied, "It's nothing. Let the kids play and forget everything. When they get to our kibbutzim, they'll be reined in."

Your heart bleeds at seeing this wholesale corruption of the children of holy parents maliciously carried out. So you try to stem the tide by yourself. That costs you everything. To a friend you suddenly become an enemy; and the enemies have become friends. They say to you, "What, you're not allowed to enjoy life? We suffered enough in Russia." And you get nowhere trying to explain, "What do you get from watching a brazen woman dancing?" Or "What will you get out of going to the movies three times a day?" You are opposed to living: "You've got to live and also to be a Jew. In the kibbutzim, too, you can be a Jew."

Victims fell daily. The permissiveness grew from day to day. They began to forget to recite afternoon and evening prayers. Then they made light of morning prayers. They "did G-d a favor" when they donned phylacteries. The originally Orthodox children began to seek compromises between their past religiosity and the permissive life of the present, and their orientation swung toward Mizrahi.

The regulations issued by the Youth Aliyah office for the transit camps, ostensibly in order maintain "neutrality" in all areas including religion, served as an excuse for the **madrichim**

to influence the children against religion and to disturb the children's religious life.

Pinchos Biberfeld, **madrich** in Mikveh Yisroel, reported: Naftali Gutman used to recite Psalms every time he thought about the fate of his family in Poland. One time they forced him to stop his prayers and to participate in a lecture by the **madrich** Mordecahi Yoffe of HaKibbutz HaMeuchad.¹

Mr. Y. Weingarten of Jerusalem reported that Pinchos Schreiber, a boy at the Chavat HaLimud camp in Talpiyot (Jerusalem) begged his **madrichim** to allow him to study Torah. They replied, "We'll teach Judaism as we understand it." That lad suffered terribly. He was just about the only child in the camp who did not yield to the influence of the **madrichim**. Rabbi Moshe Blau, in an article in *Kol Yisroel* March 11 wrote about the camp in Chavat HaLimud and about this boy:

To our sorrow, there are children in the camps for the Teheran children who have been "eliminated" spiritually by the **madrichim** of HaShomer HaTzair. For example, some recent visitors to the Chavat HaLimud camp in Ramat Rachel, Jerusalem -- which is under the supervision of Mrs. Ben Zvi -- report that this camp's children have been "eliminated", that the **madrichim** have already succeeded in removing the children from their faith. The children in this camp, to a man, are completely lost. The visitors found all the boys there playing in the yard bareheaded. They scoffed when they were spoken to about keeping commandments. The supervisors of this camp accomplished in the course of a few days what other irreligious teachers take years to attain.

With tears in his eyes, one visitor told me about the wreckage of religion in this camp. And about a

1. Kibbutzim of the atheistic Mapai (labor) party.

single, holy boy who -- of all the children -- hid under the coat of one of the visitors and begged him, amid a burst of bitter tears, to remove him from the camp and transfer him among children who have not yet been poisoned. The visitor wept with the boy, but he could not rescue him because the Jewish Agency "owns" the children body and soul, and if the Agency does not release this boy, who will release him? Who knows how much longer he will withstand temptation? How long will it be before the supervisors at Ramat Rachel "eliminate" him, too! Typical is the letter the boy wrote in Yiddish to his friend Nachman Elbaum.

"With G-d's help

"March 1, 1943

"Dear Nachman!

"I am in Chavat HaLimud near Jerusalem. I hope I will soon be rid of them and out of their hands, together with my brother Tzvi, and be studying the way I wish. May we meet in yeshiva.

"They will surely circumcise my brother soon.

"From me, your friend who hopes to see you a great Jewish scholar,

"Pinchas Schreiber"

The courage of this 12-year-old and his desire for Torah study kept him firm, and he is presently studying in a yeshiva.

HaBoker of March 21 reported on the controversy over phylacteries:

Meanwhile a new "struggle" among the **madrachim** began, and now the affair of the **t'filin** (phylacteries). In one of the Jerusalem camps, the religious **madrach** asked the boys if they want **t'filin**. This was blown up into a storm because a HaShomer

HaTzair **madrach** saw it as a subversion of the status quo. The matter was taken to the head Youth Aliyah office for a decision. There it was decided that the religious **madrach** should not be the one to ask the older boys if they want to receive **t'filin** but that the "neutral" **madrach**, a member of Mapai (Labor Party), should do the asking. Strange things are happening here and no one seems to care.

Yisroel Edelman reported: When the children arrived at Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, their four-cornered garments (talitot) were taken from them "to be laundered" and never came back from the "laundry".

Mrs. Ayala Rottenberg, Agudah **madracha** in K'far HaNoar HaDati, reported: Once a **madracha** from Teheran came to visit the children. When she saw them wearing skull-caps and four-cornered **talitot** she commented, "You wear tzizit? You pray? You'll all be sent to yeshivot to starve!" The children, very frightened, burst into tears. Dora Bader, a **madracha** from the HaShomer HaTzair Kibbutz Mizra, assured the children that even in the kibbutz the Sabbath and Jewish holy days are observed, and that the children would be able to maintain a religious lifestyle there. The children once told her about wealthy Jews in Poland who, even during the tragic period, refused to aid the poor. She commented to the children. "Those were probably the bearded Jews, the Orthodox."

Rabbi Kalman Kahane reported: In the camp at Beit Olim in the Achuza section of Haifa, the Agudah **madracha**, Mrs. Feldman, was forbidden to recite "Hear, O Israel...." with all the children together. She was only allowed to do so individually with those children who requested it. Similarly, the Mizrahi **madrach** was warned not to recite the blessing word-for-word for all the children -- lest the children who do not know the blessing learn it!

In an article headlined, "For Those who Speak Favorably", in *HaTzofeh* of May 6, Mr. Shin quoted Mizrahi *madrichim*:

About a trip to Ramat Gan the log fails to mention the visit to the school in the Boruchov section. The teacher spoke in Yiddish and said, among other things: "There was a time when Jews believed in G-d. Today we believe in man and in labor. You see that the Germans did what they did to those who believed in G-d. But we, in Palestine, live in the merit of our belief in man and labor...."

The log records, "Letters from Russia were received for the children. The crying of the children who received letters mingled with the crying of those who did not receive letters and turned into general hysteria." But the log does not tell that they cried because the letters said, "Do not forget your parents, pray for them. Believe in HaShem your G-d who took you out of Russia. Do not forget your parents who sacrificed everything in order to save you and in order to sanctify G-d, may He be blessed and praised."

While the Scroll of Esther was being read, a HaShomer HaTzair *madricha* sat and knitted. This is an indignity not only to the Jewish faith but also an insult to one's fellowmen.... When copies of the *Chumash* (Five books of Moses) were being distributed, one of the children asked if it were permissible to read the text bareheaded. A leftist *madrich* announced for all to hear, "Yes. This book is a historical text; not a religious one." That same *madrich* objected to the reading of the Scroll of Esther in the dining room "because it's a religious function...."

The children's request for religious objects aroused the objection of the *madrichim* for fear that "this will arouse religious emotions and memories of their parents' homes." The *madrich* goes on to name religious children, from Torah-observant families, who were transferred, to leftist kibbutzim by foul means.

A second *madrich* relates: In the camp diary, kept by leftist *madrichim*, the majority, there is no mention of Friday night services. They do not value, to use their own term, "this idol-worship...."

Even the nightmare of a child with high fever was turned into propaganda in the camp log: "His fever was high. There was something nightmarish disturbing his mind: Mama, Mama, these *chassidim* are hardhearted. I'll go to Ashdot. There things will be as good for me as at home. Mama, what do those Jews want from me? Where are they taking me?"

The Trips

Despite all the propaganda and inducements, the leftist *madrichim* felt they were losing. The children were not greatly attracted to the kibbutzim and remained opposed to their nonreligious *madrichim*. The Youth Aliyah office found a solution for that. About a week before the poll to determine where the children would be placed permanently, instructions went out to all the transit camps to arrange trips to the assorted kibbutzim and settlements in the Jezreel Valley. Reason argues that refugee children arriving in the Holy Land should first of all have been taken to Jerusalem to visit the holy sights and to allow them to pour out their hearts at the Wailing Wall and pray for the well-being of their parents. That is not what the Youth Aliyah office thought. Jerusalem was specifically eliminated from the plan. Jerusalem would not serve as an easy

propaganda base. On the contrary, Jerusalem was likely to stimulate the children's religious feelings. Every **madrich**-organizer arranged his trip plan in a manner that emphasized the places belonging to his party and played down the others.

In **HaTzofeh** of May 6, Mr. Shin quoted a Mizrahi **madrich**:

"At a meeting to plan the trip, I proposed that we visit S'de Eliyahu, Tirat Zvi and K'far HaNoar HaDati. At that session two letters were written, one to S'de Eliyahu and one to Ashdot Yaakov. The former letter read, 'In connection with the program for our trip we have decided to visit your kibbutz on.... Please prepare snacks.' The second letter read, 'We'd love to visit the true and original Jewish valley. We'd therefore like to visit in your settlement from Sunday night....' The tone of the two letters indicates the intentions that preceded the trip.

"The log reads, 'In Beit Alfa we visited the ancient synagogue.' But it does not relate that the children were very upset by the fact that 2,000 years ago believing Jews stood here and prayed to their Father in heaven, where now their descendants stand bareheaded and speak of their forefathers' customs the way one speaks of Central African tribes. Polish officers, Christians, were present. They did not dare bare their heads; and they asked, 'Why do Jews behave that way in holy places?'"

"In Ashdot Yaakov we visited the airport. A leftist **madrich** made special mention that 'HaPoel HaMizrachi has no share in this....' They prepared a kosher lunch for us. One child sat down at a table with children from the kibbutz, and I told him to go over to the kosher tables. A **madricha** attacked me for 'daring' to say that: 'The children don't have to know that!'

"All along the way they were told nothing about HaPoel HaMizrachi settlements. They did not even show them the grave of Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes."

In the transit camp at Magdiel, for example, there was no HaShomer HaTzair **madrich**. The coordinating **madrich**, who was a member of HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, took advantage of this and removed the HaShomer HaTzair settlements from the schedule.

Mizrachi **madrich** Yehoshua Bachrach wrote in **HaTzofeh** of May 5:

There is not enough space to write all the details observed and heard by a **madrich** over seven weeks in a transit camp, but I allow myself to ask the experts on the subject and those responsible for a single action done publicly and with public knowledge: Were the famous excursions -- where children who had only been in the country six weeks and needed to rest from their wander-weariness, some of them coming down with fever every other day and others suffering from skin ailments -- were they a legitimate educational tool: dragging groups of children around for a number of three-day excursions? By what right did they waste public funds in order to enchant the children with the great wealth of the kibbutzim? They may give answers like before. But whoever has kept up with all the situations and all the talk that accompanied and hovered around the children whenever they visited can testify that an unforgivable, wholesale crime was committed here. An article, "The Teheran Heroes" in **Yediot Acharonot** contains the following:

But you can't depend on the **madrichim** to confuse the children completely. At bottom, the **madrichim** are only human.

So you put the children in buses and take them to the Jezreel Valley. They are taken with a system: first to a Mizrahi kibbutz, then to Mishmar HaEmek, and from there to HaKibbutz HaMeuchad. Then to Chever HaKevutzot, then to a town, then again to a religious kibbutz. At every stop they let the children look around to draw their own conclusions: Is collective tilling of the soil beneficial or not? Who was right, Boruchov or Gordon of Rav Shmuel Landau?

After the children return from their investigative trip as experts on agriculture, social systems, the Middle East, afforestation, irrigation and religious and social problems -- then the **madrachim** approach them one by one and ask, 'Nu-u-u-u?'

Mr., Byzynski, at a session of the Assembly (from **HaTzofeh** of March 30).

...protested against the trips now being arranged for the children in the camps, for many have declared and have demonstrated that the trips are being made with the clear intention of displaying the great wealth of certain settlements in order to influence the children to prefer them to religious settlements.

Mrs. D. Shidletzky, the Agudah **madricha** in Magdiel, stated that before the trip, the coordinating **madrach**, Aryeh Ben-Gurion announced that the girls were to wear shorts during the trip. Efforts had been made earlier to influence the girls in this area, and one of the **madrichot** had walked around in this immodest attire, telling the girls how pleasant and comfortable it is. Out of their natural modesty, the girls had constantly refused. But they understood this announcement as an order, and they complied. During the trip, at Afikim, the religious **madrachim** cautioned the children that the meat was

not kosher. The **madrach** Aryeh Ben-Gurion demonstratively asked for meat for himself and said to the children, 'Who ever wants to eat meat can come eat it!'

Avraham Mokotovsky, the Agudah **madrach** at Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, reported his impressions of the excursions in **HaDerech** (No. 31):

Close to \$15,000 was spent by the Jewish Agency on these trips, and not for nothing. The excursions were not arranged haphazardly, but were organized by one guiding hand. The Left was aware that these trips were to be a final step in 'preparing' the children, so it did not spare any effort to make them a success. A detailed plan was made for receptions at every stop; even the speeches were prepared in advance. Instructions were sent to all the kibbutzim; 'Call meetings and prepare all your members, especially the youth, for the children's visit. This is what you are to do, and this is what you are to say.'

My man in Ein Charod told me that a week before we came an assembly was held for the whole kibbutz, and they were told about the 'Agudah plot' to grab all the children away to yeshivos: They influence them in the name of the Rebbe, they publish journals for them, and make them take an oath to be Agudists and not Zionists. Whereas we will only influence the children with beauty, love and joy. Prepare to receive them well.

Later I discovered that such assemblies were held in the other places, too. And they did not labor in vain. The official line was that the children were to be shown how the land is being built. But in reality they are afraid to show them real work, because they know that these children are not impressed by labor. So

they showed them only the kibbutz dining rooms, the silos full of bounty, their beautiful schools; joy and happiness; speeches, plays, dances, delicacies and plenty of money. See, children, see how we build the land! In Mishmar HaEmek they showed them the gigantic school building and the beautiful dining room, and they taught them Palestinian dances. In Ein Charod -- joyful youth. In Tel Amal -- again the dining room, spotless cleanliness, and fish ponds. In Ashdot Yaakov -- good jam and airplanes. At both Deganyas -- beautiful parties, excellent children's performances and schoolchildren turned out in their best. In Tirat Zvi (Mizrachi) -- mild neglect and incompetence at receiving guests. In Merchavia -- a beautifully furnished dining room. In Nahalal -- a luxurious girl's agricultural school established by the World Zionist Organization, schoolgirls dancing the Krakovik with red kerchiefs on their heads "just like the village shiksas back home", besides that, there are mezuzos on the doorposts and they say the kitchen is kosher and that the Sabbath is not desecrated. What else can you ask for? In K'far HaNoar HaDati (Mizrachi) -- the same as Tirat Zvi. In Yagur -- unlimited wealth.

That's how we build the land, and that's how the Left spreads its propaganda. After all this, there is no need to wage war against the Agudah "soul-hunters", those boys and girls who come to "corrupt" the children, who get them "drunk" on wine, who "stuff" them with cake, and who give them nice presents in order to win them over. Now there is no longer any need to fight. The boys themselves keep away from the yeshiva boys' gatherings, and the girls themselves look down upon the poor presents and are ashamed

when someone reminds them that they were once Beth Jacob students. For how can these gatherings and presents compare with the great wealth they just saw?

Moreover, it is now possible to use these children to influence their younger brothers and sisters, to lie to them that their martyred parents were also irreligious--desecrated the Sabbath and ate unkosher food. Why the lies? So that Youth Aliyah should not, G-d forbid, send them to yeshivos.

Mrs. Szold's report to the Jewish Agency (Davar of 19 May) reads in part:

Children's visits to different parts of the land were made in order to acquaint them with the land and with the development of the Jewish settlement. These excursions had great educational value in their Zionist influence and in directing the children toward agricultural work. All the children, when it came time for them to choose their futures, expressed a desire for agricultural training in the villages.

This is the initiator's admission of the propaganda aim of the trips.

Upon their return from the trip, the children were indeed new people. The kibbutzim, in their eyes, were a kind of heaven on earth without work or sweat, only eating and drinking and relaxation. They were starved for relaxation after all their tribulations. Seeing the glory and the great wealth of the kibbutzim was a major experience for them, and it was decisive when it came time to choose a future.

Chapter 7 The Distribution

The behavior of the *madrichim* in Teheran and in the transit camps, the propagandizing, and the visits to the kibbutzim were only preparatory stages directed at the final goal, which was the distribution of the children to their permanent absorption places. The Jewish Agency officials found the moment ripe to demonstrate that all their great efforts to win the children's hearts and to wean them away from their parental faith had not been in vain. Now they could take them physically, too. The children would be absorbed by the big kibbutzim and, like the seven fat cows in Pharaoh's dream, no one would be able to tell "that they had come inside them." Their new mode of life would finally remove the last traces of their parental legacy. In the kibbutzim, they would find their new homes and their new families, and, along with the horrors of yesterday, their homes and families of yesteryear would drop into the abyss of the forgotten.

Retrospectively, we can assert that the Jewish Agency followed a clear calculated plan. Nothing it did was done haphazardly, but rather with a deliberate policy. All its actions followed each other like steps on a ladder and were successful. The distribution was the harvest of the seeds they had planted. The Jewish Agency reaped with joy, while Orthodox Jewry wept.

The Selection Committee

Once the children had been adequately primed for the questioning and the subsequent distribution, the Jewish Agency began the work of closing down the transit camps by sending the children to their permanent absorption places. The poll to determine where they would be sent took place from April 6th to April 15th. Not one Agudath Israel representative was invited to the polling that took place in the Jerusalem camps.

Only after the Agudah Executive protested vehemently in a letter dated April 7th (printed in Chapter IV), did a letter dated April 12 arrive from Mrs. Szold:

"I shall be visiting Petach Tikva this morning. I ask you to tell your representative in Petach Tikva to help me poll the children at Beit HaChalutzot. In case you do not have a Petach Tikva representative, I shall thank you to ask your representative in Tel Aviv to come to Petach Tikva to participate in the questioning."

The Executive replied to this letter:

"In reply to your letter of today to send a representative to assist at the examination of the children in Petach Tikva:

"Since we have received no answer to our many letters and requests;

"And since the entire polling of the children is an absurdity, for despite the decision not to ask small children, children under 14 are questioned;

"And since we were not consulted before you began to distribute the children, and the entire distribution is taking place without us--there is no purpose in any of us participating and being present during this performance which has been fully programmed in advance."

The "questioning and investigation" were indeed nothing more than a painful performance. **HaBoker** of April 14 charged that the public had not heeded the warnings about the treatment of the Teheran children at the hands of the irreligious *madrichim*. The article continued with a description of the polling process to determine where the children would be sent:

"During the days of the committee visits, the camps turn into real fairs; they look like election

propaganda centers," a trustworthy source reported to a Ha'Aretz correspondent. The Agency committee sits in a room and calls in every boy and girl separately to declare where they want to go and also to determine their religiosity. Outside stand the madrichim and each of them tries to "counsel" every child before he enters the committee room. The means of persuasion include promises of good treatment in the child's new home, primarily the promise of good food. Many children, when they step into the room, immediately announce the name of the settlement they wish to go to. For the most part, these are settlements they have visited. Some children announce the home of the political party the settlement belongs to--HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, HaShomer HaTzair, Agudah, etc. When one such child was asked, "What is HaKibbutz HaMeuchad?" he could only reply, "That is the affiliation of the settlement I visited."

Jewish children's souls wandered in the midst of their "fair." Persecuted and denigrated in exile, they have no peace in its homeland. I visualize the children I met on my trip to the camps playing innocently. And suddenly they are again thrown into the frightening confusion of a way-station on their unending journey from Poland via Teheran. They finally get to taste a bit of belated childhood, and their madrichim force them back into an atmosphere of adulthood and the struggle for survival from which they deserve to be freed. A fair is in process around them, and they are the merchandise being passed from hand to hand.... And the committee of inquiry sits closed up in its room, seeing yet not seeing what is taking place outside its door--and before its very eyes.

With what authority do they again subject our children's souls to such torture.

Ephraim Offenberg, who was present during the questioning in Mikveh Yisroel and in Magdiel, drew the same picture. Each child entered the committee room with the name of a settlement or a party on his lips. Offenberg testified that children below the age of 14 were asked what kind of education they wanted. Mr. Beit, Mrs. Szold's representative, would ask children leading questions. In cases where an older brother or sister chose an irreligious kibbutz, Beit would ask the younger siblings, "So, you surely want to go with your big brother, don't you?" The little ones would naturally answer, "yes" to such a question even when they did not know where the older ones had chosen to go.

In Magdiel the coordinating madrich, Aryeh ben-Gurion, was from Yagur. Almost all the children who did not choose Mizrahi or Agudah chose Yagur. Not a single child chose to remain in the Magdiel agricultural school that had housed the transit camp. Dr. Ellenberg, principal of the school, asserted at a session of the selection committee that the day of selection was turned into a market-place by the madrichim and especially by the coordinating madrich who induced the children to choose Yagur. The HaShomer HaTzair representative protested vehemently--not one child chose a HaShomer HaTzair kibbutz--that the coordinator had arranged the trip with the Mizrahi madrich and had deliberately left out HaShomer HaTzair kibbutzim from the trip schedule, which is why no child chose such a kibbutz.

Mrs. Ayala Rottenberg, the Agudath Israel madricha in K'far HaNoar HaDati, said: "It was heartrending to hear the children talking on the night before and on the day of the selection. The camp was like a cauldron. The children walked around at a loss. Even the little ones said that they would have

to stay up all night to decide what to say. They kept asking each other what to tell Mrs. Szold the next day."

Details About the Selection

Mrs. Sarah Wein, the Agudas Israel **madricha** in the transit camp at Meshek HaPoalot in Chadera, told of the polling process there. Zvi Goldberg, 7, and his brother Yaakov, 12, of Warsaw, both had learned in **cheider**: The selection committee asked them several questions, including, "Did your father pray every day? Did your mother light candles in honor of the Sabbath? Did your father recite **kiddush** on wine Friday night?" They answered all these questions in the affirmative. Finally, they asked them if their father recited **havdalah** on Saturday nights over a cup of wine. They replied that they did not remember. On this basis they were written down as nonreligious and were sent away to a nonreligious settlement. Regarding several children who stated that they had studied in **cheider** and had worn **tzitzis** (fringes), the **madrichim** explained that in the small towns there were no other schools but the **cheider** and so, for lack of choice, the children's parents had sent their children to the **cheider** even if they were not religious. Since all the children in the **cheider** wore **tzitzis**, the children of nonreligious parents also wore them. (As a matter of fact, every town had a government public school set aside for Jews, and the only children who attended the **cheider** were those whose parents were religious.) The **madrichim** also explained to Mrs. Szold that the children who requested religious education were doing this under the influence of the religious **madrichim**, while they themselves were really the children of nonreligious parents.

Mrs. Wein further testified: Chana Lerner, 6, of Lesko and her sister Baila, 8, studied in Bais Yaakov. Their brothers, Yehuda Leib, 12, and Yosef Yehoshua, 13, studied in a **cheider**. Three of the above children requested religious education. One of the brothers decided at the last minute that he wanted

nonreligious education. Using the demand of this one brother as an excuse, the **madrichim** opposed sending the other children to a religious educational institution, and the matter was brought to Mrs. Szold for a final decision. (It should be noted that not one of these children was 14 or older. Consequently, none of the children was supposed to have the right to decide for himself, and the nature of the parental home was to be the sole deciding factor.)

On the other hand, an 11-year-old boy named Yaakov Rubinson of Alexandroki was sent to Ahava, despite his refusal to go there. The child cried and screamed in front of a large crowd that gathered in the street of Chadera, but he was forced into a car and taken away.

A boy named Moshe Segal, 13, of Warsaw, who had studied in a **cheider** and requested religious education, and the Hamburg children of Kalisz -- Sarah, 9, and her brother Avraham, 11, who studied in a **cheider**, both of whom also requested totally religious education for they are the children of religious parents -- were sent by Mrs. Szold to the Ahava Institution (about the nature of this institution we will talk later in this chapter).

Esther Hillman of Lenchitz, 16, a student of Bais Yaakov whose father was a **chasid** of Munkacs, was sent to a nonreligious place, as were her brother Yisrael, 8, who had studied in a **cheider** and her other brother, Zvi, 15, who had studied in a **cheider** and who still knew an entire chapter of tractate **Chulin** with the commentary **Tosafos** by heart. They were all sent to General Zionist schools.

Abraham Kaufman of Lomza, 10, who had studied in a **cheider**, was sent to a General Zionist school together with his sister Chaya, 17, and brother Yonah, 16. A girl named Lusia Wentka of Czechanow, 10, and her brother Yosef, 17, who had

studied in a *cheider*, children of religious parents, were sent to leftist schools. Alter Zeidman of Kaluszyn, 13, who had studied in a *cheider*, requested religious education. He was evaluated as a "dubious" case, and the final decision was left for Mrs. Szold. The same is true for the brothers Aryeh Leib Rawick, 9, and Moshe, 11, who both requested religious education.

The Frimmerman children of Krasnobord -- Moshe, 9, who had studied in *cheider*, and his sister Miriam, 10, a pupil of Bais Yaakov -- whose father was a *chasid* of Trisk and whose mother was a famous righteous Jewess in whose home all the *chassidic* rabbis used to stay, were sent for Passover to a relative in Ramat HaKovesh.

Of twenty-nine boys in Chadera, twenty-one had studied in *cheider*. Of the seventeen girls, three were pupils of Bais Yaakov. Seven children had never gone to school before because of their tender age. Nevertheless, not one boy or girl was sent to an Agudath Israel school. Of the forty-six children, only nine were 14 years or older. In other words, the other thirty-five were not supposed to choose their own schools. The selection and the clarification were under Mrs. Szold's personal supervision.

Mrs. Ayala Rottenberg, a *madricha* in K'far HaNoar HaDati, testified: Leah-Kammer of Rosvadow, 15, was a Bais Yaakov pupil from a very Orthodox home. Her father, during his stay in Siberia, hungered throughout the Passover holiday so as not to eat leavened foods. Her aunt, her mother's sister from Haifa, was interested in the girl's continuing her religious education.

The girl and her friend, a girl named Schneider who had relatives in Yagur, both kept the Sabbath and recited blessings, etc. They were influenced by the *madrichim*, and the girl chose to move to Yagur. With her was her brother Moshe, 7, a very religious boy, who prayed three times a day and said *kaddish* for

his deceased parents. At first, the sister consented to leave her brother in K'far HaNoar HaDati. At last, though, she decided to take him along with her. When the boy heard this, he burst into tears and began to call on his dead mother. Even Mrs. Szold was very impressed, and she tried to convince the girl to remain in K'far HaNoar HaDati because of her brother or to leave him there. The girl refused, and the will of the 15-year-old girl decided the fate of her brother; both were sent to Yagur.

Rabbi Yitzchak Greenberg testified in the name of Mr. Munk that he visited Moshe Kammer in Yagur. At first the child was taken every day to the "parents' synagogue" accompanied by very strict guards. The child was compelled to leave the synagogue immediately after saying *kaddish*. The adults in Yagur told Munk that the child finally stopped coming to the synagogue to say *kaddish*.

Sarah Dotskowski of Warsaw, 15, from a religious home, at first said that she would go only to a place where the Sabbath and the laws of kosher food were kept. She was influenced to choose Yagur. When I asked her why she made this decision, she replied that it is possible to remain religious in Yagur, too. Her brother Zelig, 9, refused to accompany her there. On the first day of the selection, Mrs. Szold herself decided to grant his request and to leave him in K'far HaNoar HaDati. When the irreligious *madrichim* protested, she sent the boy to Yagur as well. The above-mentioned girls said that if they had been brought to a religious place on arrival in Palestine, they would have remained there. But since they had been given a choice, they preferred Yagur.

The selection and the division of the children were directed by Mrs. Szold in person. To the Miztrachi she sent all those she determined were to receive a religious education. Not one was sent to Agudah. Here is a list of girls who admitted that they had been pupils in Bais Yaakov schools: Chava Manderman of

Warsaw, 11, whose father was a *chasid* of Ger. Leah Kammer, mentioned above. Chana Krumbein of Lancz, 11, and her sister Miriam, 13. Leah Bauer of Jaroslaw, 11, whose father had been a *chasid* of Belz. With her were two brothers, Yaakov, 14, who wished to study Talmud, and Simcha, 12. Rivkah Sonnenstern, of Karaszow, 13, and her sister Rachel, age 8. Mrs. Rottenberg did not keep a list of the schools that the boys had studied in, but she had known that a large number of them studied in *chassidic chadorim*.

Mrs. Deborah Shedlitzky, the Agudah *madricha* in the transit camp at the agricultural school testified: Ita Kaminer of Skrihitzin, 17, whose family were *chassidim* of the rebbe of Ger, studied in Bais Yaakov. Her uncle, Meir Weidislavsky of Haifa, decided to adopt her, and the girl could not make up her mind between her uncle's home and an Agudah kibbutz. On the day of the selection, a *madrich* named Yosef Potash convinced her not to go to her relatives as she would not have the opportunity to study there. Before the commission, she declared that she wished to go to K'far HaNoar HaDati. After her decision, she was very depressed, did not eat supper or breakfast the next morning, and cried ceaselessly. Only after she received permission to change her mind to travel to her uncle did she calm down.

That same *madrich*, Potash, on the day of selection, influenced a girl named Yaffa Geller, 14, from Jaroslaw, a pupil of Bais Yaakov whose parents were *chassidim*. The girl had wished to continue her Bais Yaakov studies in Palestine, but under his influence, she chose Ahava.

Sarah Berkowitz, 15, of Grodzhensky, came from a *chassidic* family and had studied four years in Bais Yaakov. Her brothers Moshe, 14, and Shmuel, 12, had learned in *cheider*. The children decided at the very first moment that they were going to go to Agudah. The girl declared many times that her parent's

wish was that they should go to Agudah schools. The Mizrahi *madrich*, Yaakov Klosky, influenced the brother Moshe several days before the selection to choose Mizrahi. Upon hearing the change in his brother's thinking, the child Shmuel began to cry. And the sister, who did not want to be separated from her brothers, was compelled to change her mind.

The Nathanson brothers, Shmuel and Dov of Bielsko, were members of HaShomer HaDati. Their father was a Mizrahi member, and they decided to go to Mizrahi. A short time before the selection, a relative of theirs influenced them, and they remained temporarily in Magdiel until there would be room for them in the General Zionist school.

Children who had prayed every day and upon arrival in the camp had demanded fringed garments, phylacteries and prayerbooks, walked around after the selection bareheaded, and one of them stopped praying. Moshe Strushevitsky of Warsaw, 16, and his brother Pesach, 14, upon arrival in the camp were religious, wore fringes, prayed every day, and decided they were going to go to Tirat Zvi (Mizrahi). Two days before the selection, the *madrichim* succeeded in convincing them to choose a nonreligious place.

Yosef Kraus of Lezhajsk studied in a *cheider*; his sister Leah, 12, studied in Bais Yaakov. A relative of theirs from Neveh Eitan influenced them, and at the selection the boy chose Deganya; his sister was sent along with him. To the question, "How would your father react to this?" he replied, "I will remain religious in Deganya, too."

Abraham Lewenburg of Ostrow, 14, was very religious; when his sisters, Gisha and Shoshana, 16, chose Yagur, the boy was sent along with them.

Tova Mannes of Tomaszov and her sister Matala, 13, both pupils in Bais Yaakov, had decided to go to Bais Yaakov. They

used to speak about the religious influence that they had had upon their friends and how much they had suffered throughout their wanderings in order to keep the commandments. Someone from the same city, who claimed to be an uncle used to visit them frequently and bring them gifts and dresses. He influenced them to choose Deganya. Madrich Chana of Hefzibah convinced them it was possible to remain religious even in leftist kibbutzim.

Rivkah Kupfer of Przeworsk, 17, a Bais Yaakov pupil, was religious; under the influence of her uncle, she chose Ahava.

Shlomo Fleisher, 12, of Tarnobrzeg, a very religious boy by choice, knew all the blessings by heart. When his sister, Esther, 14, chose a nonreligious place, he was sent along with her.

Molly Graf of Yosefow, 16, a Bais Yaakov pupil, and her brother Chaim, 15, chose a nonreligious place. Miriam Zaverucha of Plock, 17, a Bais Yaakov pupil, and her brothers Tzvi, 15, and Yaakov, 13, all went to a nonreligious place.

Chana Zeligowitz of Dalogosidlo had studied in Bais Yaakov; her father was a chasid of Ger and a ritual slaughterer in his hometown. Under the influence of the Mizrachi madrich, she chose Mizrachi education, and her 14-year-old brother was compelled to accompany her. Both had originally planned to go to Agudath Israel schools.

Nathan Littwer of Misznitz, 16, and his brother Binyomin, 15, whose father was an Agudah leader and dedicated activist, have a sister living in Haifa. Her husband, David Rubinstein, published the following letter in *Kol Yisrael* of June 10:

Among the Teheran children who arrived are two children from the city of Misznitz, Poland. From what kind of family they come, Rabbi Pluczenik, the rabbi of Misznitz, can testify. He knows the children's father and has known the children since they were born. The children, until they left their hometown,

studied in a yeshiva. Their home was a traditional religious home in the spirit of 100% uncompromising Judaism. When the children arrived in Palestine, "arrangements were made for them" in Yagur near Haifa, despite their wishes and the wishes of their relatives in this land. Only after much effort did they "concede" and made fresh arrangements for the younger one at K'far HaNoar HaDati; but the older one remained in Yagur.

During his early days of his "being provided for", the first of May came on a Saturday. All the children, thirty in all, were taken by bus in the midst of the Sabbath day with great joy and festivity to participate in the celebrations and the parades in the streets of Haifa. Our lad, who had a bit of courage, sneaked away on Friday and came to Haifa, knowing that otherwise he would be compelled to travel on the Sabbath. Most of the children are unfortunately orphans who recite **kaddish**. The day of their arrival here, they were "permitted" to pray in the synagogue of the old people and to say **kaddish** as they wished. The next day, a "decree" was issued stating that it was not permissible for all of them to pray together, but that at each prayer of the three daily prayers, two of the children would participate. The children took turns for two days, and then stopped going. One of the old people asked the children why they had stopped coming. How shocked and furious did this old man grow when the child told him through his tears that all the children who wished to go to say **kaddish** had their hats taken away from them....

As the relatives of these two boys, I protest in any form of protest possible against the snatching of these

sacred Jewish children of holy parents who made every sacrifice for G-d's sake. As a believing Jew, I warn all these "educators" that they will pay for this kidnapping. For "he who leads one to sin is worse than he who kills him."

What the murderers did not achieve in Poland, our destroyers from within wish to complete here in the Holy Land.

Avraham Frankel, one of the Teheran children who visited Yagur, reported that Littwer told him that he had stopped praying. They had talked him into going to Yagur by promising that he would get to study a trade in the local trade school, but in the end they did not get him into the school at all.

Moshe Kornblit of Lublin, 15, and his brother Tzvi, both religious, were sent to non-religious places. Eliezer Yaroslowitz of Lezhajsk, 13, wanted to attend a yeshiva, he was sent to a Mizrachi school. Yehudah Herring of Zamoscz, 15, and his brother Moshe, 13, both religious, were sent to non-religious places. Miriam Katz of Tomaszow, 17, a religious girl, was sent to a non-religious place. Mila Nagelberg of Brezhany, from a religious home and herself religious, was influenced by her brother to go to Nahalal. Chaya Roth of Warsaw, 14, a religious girl, went to Ahava. Yitzhak Hoffman of Warsaw, 15, and his brother Avrohom, 13, both religious, went to non-religious places.

Of the total of twenty-four girls in the camp, nine said that they had studied in Bais Yaakov. Only one of them was given to her relatives; not one was given to Agudath Israel, seven to Mizrachi, and sixteen to non-religious places. The selection and the division were under the personal direction of Mr. Beit.

About the camp at Meshek Hapoalot in Petach Tikva, Rabbi Zev Edelman testified that: of twenty girls, seven said they had studied in Bais Yaakov. They are Rosa and Shaindy from

of Zagushev, Channah Kammer of Czeszanow, Gina Fishover of Yaroslav, Chaya Greenberg of Gaborova, and Ada Dayan and Shoshana Firer of Yaroslav. Not one of them was sent to Agudath Israel.

Shoshana Firer was the daughter of a Chassidic rabbi in Yaroslav. Here is what Yehoshua Bachrach, a Mizrachi madrich wrote about her in *Hatzofeh* of May 5:

That girl, the daughter of the town tzaddik (holyman)

Rabbi Chaim of Yaroslav, was scrupulous in her observance during the four years of her wanderings and never ate non-kosher food. She was the first to receive a *siddur* (prayer book) when they arrived in Teheran. And she remained loyal to her father and to the school she had been educated in to sanctify G-d and His name until she was taken on a trip here in this land. What all the hardships, sufferings and hunger could not accomplish in the lands of her enemies was accomplished here by satiety, by the words of loving brothers and by the beautiful attractiveness to her of Mishmar HaEmek. Suddenly the 15-year-old girl left her education and way of life behind and with her new awareness went to this fortress of HaShomeir Hatzair where, as it was phrased in *Davar* the "educational level is more desirable."

Let us assume that we may not protest against the rights of your Hebrew secular culture and education, but does that right relate only to you and your children or do you have the right to impose it on all of Jewry? Who and what gave you rights over the daughter of Rabbi Chaim of Yaroslav? Because she is an orphan all alone in the world who has suffered poverty and pain and came to the Holy Land to find peace and life -- does that justify your picking her up

and taking her for yourselves? What will you tell this Rabbi Chaim who will come to you tomorrow to seek his daughter and will find her to his great shame in Mishmar HaEmek? What will you tell him? How will you console him?

The girl spent the Passover holiday in Mishmar HaEmek. The eating of leavened foods on Passover so shocked her that she wrote a letter to Mrs. Szold. In it she stated that the **madrichim** had told her that the school in Mishmar HaEmek was the best in the land and that men of culture from Tel Aviv, too, send their children there. After all that she saw with her own eyes, she refused to remain there and she wished to speak to Mrs. Szold about the entire topic. On May 2, Mrs. Szold and the girl met in the presence of her relative, Mr. Parnes of Jerusalem. The Firer girl asked permission to be transferred to the Chorev school in Jerusalem. Mrs. Szold said to the girl, "You just arrived in the land and you already know that the best school for you is Chorev? I know better schools than that." Here Mr. Parnes interrupted and rebuked Mrs. Szold for attempting to influence the girl in favor of a nonreligious school, and he asked her why she hadn't tried earlier to talk the girl out of going to the school in Mishmar HaEmek. Why hadn't she asked her then "How do you know this school is good for you?"

Among the boys the noteworthy instances are: Alexander Tellerman of Warsaw, 12, who chose nonreligious education, though he said that his father had gone to the synagogue every single Sabbath. Moshe Schreiber, the son of chassidic parents, was listed as "dubious". The same for a boy named Reboda from Dlogoszidla. Eli Frankel of Zakupany, the son of chassidic parents, chose a leftist kibbutz.

Yisroel Shadmi testified: Abraham Schwingwurzle and another boy named Helfman, who were in the transit camp at

Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, were religious boys, and they were confident they would go to a religious school. Helfman was from Izhbitza and his father had been a **chossid** of Radzin. During the selection, he said that his father used to don Rabbeinu Tam's phylacteries (indicative of a high degree of piety). In the middle of the selection, the **madrichim** took some of the boys into a special room and told them that yeshiva students eat from the labor of the kibbutzim, that if not for the kibbutzim they would all starve from hunger, and that "they are ungrateful toward us and speak evil about us." A few boys were influenced by this speech and, during the selection asked to be sent to Ein Charod (an anti-religious kibbutz). Avrohom Mokotovsky, the Agudath Israel **madrich** in the transit camp at Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, relates that he took the Schwingwurzle boy to visit Chief Rabbi Herzog, and the boy told the rabbi that "even in a leftist kibbutz you can remain religious." The rabbi answered him, "I visited Ein Charod for one day and I immediately felt an inner coldness, yet you expect to observe the Torah and its commandments there?" The boy gave his hand to Chief Rabbi Herzog in a solemn promise that he would go to a religious place. Ultimately, he went to Ein Charod. Mr. Shadmi visited the Schwingwurzle boy in Ein Charod, and the boy told him that he refused to speak to anyone who would not bare his head because of religious reasons. Kol Yisroel of July 1 reported:

The boy, Abraham Schwingwurzle, may he rest in peace, of the Teheran children, died on the holy Sabbath day two weeks ago, while he was swimming in the pool in Ein Charod.

Noam Rubin, a Mizrachi **madrich** in the transit camp at Chavat HaLimud in Jerusalem testified to Mr. Shadmi and told Mr. Rosenberg: a boy named Rubinstein, a very religious boy, was written down during the selection in the presence of Mrs.

Szold for a religious institution. The next day, under outside influence, he changed his mind. The Youth Aliyah office stated by telephone that Rubinstein had permission to change his mind and to go to his relative in Yagur, since relatives have a prior claim. In the end, the boy was deposited in Ein Charod, where he had no relatives.

In contrast, two boys named Leder, who had been inscribed in Mrs. Szold's presence for a nonreligious school, changed their minds the next morning and wished to go to a religious school. Mrs. Szold informed them that she would not accept changes of decision.

Rubin testified about two other instances which took place in the camp at Chavat HaLimud. A girl who had been a Bais Yaakov pupil was visited by a nonreligious relative who claimed that her parents were not religious and that the girl had been sent to Bais Yaakov because the parents could not afford to pay tuition. (As a matter of fact, the reverse was true: in the government public schools for Jews, every boy and girl studied free. In Bais Yaakov, a tuition fee was charged). The relative's explanation was accepted. A boy, who throughout his stay in the transit camp maintained that his parents were religious; was visited by a nonreligious relative who claimed that the child's parents were not religious, contrary to the claim of the child. The relative's opinion was accepted.

Rabbis Y. D. S. and Rabbi D. F. (their names are withheld at their request) related the following information: In Chavat HaLimud, in the Talpiyot section of Jerusalem, were two sisters, Fruma and Leah Holtzer, with their little brother. Their father was a *chasid* of Tzanz. Fruma had studied in Bais Yaakov, and her sister had been a teacher in Bais Yaakov, having graduated from the Bais Yaakov Seminary in Cracow. Another brother, a *chasid* of Bobov, had remained in Russia. In Atilit, Fruma got to know Mrs. Hadasah Weidislawsky, an

Agudath Israel *madricha* who was a friend of her older sister. Even in Russia, Fruma never desecrated the Sabbath. She had an uncle living in Beit Yehoshua who warned her not to go there because the place was absolutely irreligious. The rest of the family, however, attempted to influence her to choose Beit Yehoshua. During the selection, she denied the character of the family and the fact that she had a sister who was a teacher in a Beth Jacob school. When she was asked what her parents would say if they found her in a nonreligious place, she replied that the *madrichot* had explained to her that her parents had surely died and would never see her again. She was sent to Beit Yehoshua, but her sister Lala and the little brother were sent to Deganya.

Mrs. Shoshana Feldman, the Agudath Israel *madricha* in the transit camp at Beit Olim in Haifa declared that the division of the children contained a calculated injustice. The children were divided along religious and nonreligious lines. Afterwards, it turned out that all the religious children were given to Mizrahi. Since all the children in the transit camp, except for three, were under 13 years of age, it was impossible to prove that the children had come from Agudath Israel homes. She was not given any opportunity to protest against the selection, for within several days of the polling, the children were notified where they were to go. Children in the "dubious" category were sent to "apparently religious" educational institutions, specifically to Nahalal or to the "religious homes" in K'far Yehoshua. But, of course, they would study in the general or leftist schools. After the selection, it became clear that only fourteen of the children were not religious, but only 50% were going to receive an even slightly religious education.

A boy named Shimon Rotseid, 16, from Warsaw told of his treatment by the Jewish Agency. He arrived in Palestine with a small group from Teheran. Shortly after the majority of the

children had arrived, Mr. Rokach, the Jewish Agency representative in Tel Aviv, sent him to Nahalal without inquiring where the lad came from and without asking his opinion. The boy had no idea what kind of place Nahalal was, nor did he imagine there were irreligious settlements in the Holy Land. In Nahalal he was settled in with one of the local families. During the Passover holiday they gave him leavened food to eat. He saw with his own eyes how the chickens were beleaded. He was forced to work from six A. M. to 7 P. M. with a lunch break. It seemed to him in all respects that he was still in Russia. Without the permission of his "host" he left Nahalal. A second boy from the same group who was in the home of another "host", secretly wished to join Rotseid and escape. At the last moment, he was caught by his "host" and was beaten in Rotseid's presence. The man punched the boy on the head and in the face.

The picture is incomplete. We lack details about the camps where there were no Agudah **madrichim**. It seems reasonable to assume that in those places where there were no Agudah **madrichim** the situation was no better and no fewer children were denied their birthright.

The System of Selection and the Numbers

The system for the selection was uniform in all the camps as far as Agudath Israel was concerned. All the children recognized as religious were sent to Mizrachi with the exception of twenty children over the age of 14 who insisted that they be given Agudath Israel education. At a press conference held on May 16th, Mr. Dobkin, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, attempted to explain the miniscule number that Agudath Israel received by saying (Davar of May 27):

By the way, it seems appropriate to emphasize that the commission which divided up the children was ready to give Agudath Israel more children from

religious homes, but the children refused and chose Mizrachi education.

In a report submitted by Mrs. Szold to the Jewish Agency, we find the following statistics about the age of the children:

Age 5 - 11; Age 6 - 19; Age 7 - 29; Age 8 - 27; Age 9 - 29; Age 10 - 36; Age 11 - 17; Age 12 - 73; Age 13 - 90; Age 14 - 94; Age 15 - 87; Age 16 - 84; Age 17 - 60; Age 18 - 3; Infants - 21.¹

As stated earlier, the Jewish Agency had publicly announced that they had decided not to ask children fourteen years of age and under where they wanted to be educated. According to the above figures, there were 446 children in this category. Their placement was to have been determined by the life-style of their parents' home and by their previous education. The parents' wishes in these cases was not difficult to guess because the vast majority of the boys had attended **cheider** and the girls had attended Beth Jacob schools. Yet, of all these children, Agudath Israel did not receive a single one.

Also, Dobkin's announcement that the Jewish Agency would have wished to give more children to Agudath Israel, but could not do so because the children refused contradicts the principle of not considering the opinions of the smaller children. The "refusal" of the children to be sent to Agudath Israel institutions is especially interesting when we report that today there are more than seventy boys and girls of the Teheran children studying in Agudath schools. These children ran away and continue to run away from the assorted schools of Mizrachi and the leftists. They come to the Agudath schools requesting to be admitted and educated in accordance with the spirit and the wishes of their parents.

1. From an article entitled, "The Teheran Children Affair in the Light of the Facts," Davar, May 19.

At the press conference mentioned above, Dobkin said:

Ninety-five children below the age of 14 were sent to nonreligious education, seventeen of them because that was their parents' wish and some thirty of them because they did not wish to be separated from their older brothers and sisters who had chosen nonreligious education. Do these isolated instances justify the racket raised throughout the world?

Of the ninety-five young children that Dobkin admitted giving to nonreligious institutions, he "explained" the distribution of forty-seven of them, but he failed to explain why the other forty-eight were sent to nonreligious institutions. The figure of ninety-five is also surprising. According to the above report by Mrs. Szold, we find there were 446 children below the age of 14. Out of the 278 children Mizrahi received, 108 were over 14.¹ In other words, Mizrahi received only 170 children below the age of 14. If we added ninety-five to 170, there are still another one hundred children who were not given religious education and were not mentioned at all. **HaTzofeh** of April 30 published the list of the division:

The Teheran children left the temporary camps the week before Passover and were transferred to their permanent stations:

30 infants to infants' homes

26 to relatives

16 are in hospitals

278 to settlements and educational institutions of the Mizrahi

32 to Agudath Israel institutions

36 to the Ahava children's home and to Beit Yehoshua

298 to settlements and institutions of the left.

1. Rabbi A. Neufeld, "The Correct Conclusion", in **HaTzofeh**, May 25.

Older siblings and younger siblings were not separated so long as that could be used as an excuse to send the little ones to nonreligious places along with the older ones. Ultimately, they did separate siblings and took the younger ones to Beit Alfa. A Mizrahi **madrich**, Yehoshua Bachrach, attested to this in his article in **HaTzofeh** of May 5.

Just as she went, along with her went many dozens of boys and girls. And along with them went their younger brothers and sisters, for how could anyone separate children of the same parents? Only now has it become known to us that there, with the party's permission, the children were again divided and the little ones sent to Beit Alfa.

Now the boys are writing from various settlements (Ein Charod, Afikim and Givath Brenner), saying they are happy to let us know that they are continuing to pray with a quorum and to don their phylacteries which they brought with them; and also that they were promised kosher food throughout Passover in the kitchen for the senior citizens. How sickening are these "kosher" educational means employed by these people who have managed to convince these orphans that they will be able to continue to keep the commandments of the Torah in a secular environment. Isn't this a criminal offense?

Here you have the first Seder night: The entire settlement with its hundreds of members sits down to enjoy its "traditional" Seder with leavened bread and unleavened bread in the dining hall. And the youth from Teheran -- to be more exact, from Poland -- sit in the Senior Citizen's home and eat kosher. Any **madrich** who sat with them understood, as we did, the statement in the Passover Haggadah, "This year we are here; next year...."

The Nature of the Absorption Settlements

The institutions Ahava in Haifa and Kibbutz Beit Yehoshua were recognized by the Youth Aliyah office as religious institutions. HaTzofeh of April 18 wrote about that:

Three weeks ago, the Youth Aliyah office of the Jewish Agency considered the possibility of absorbing religious children in Beit Yehoshua, a General Labor Zionist settlement, and the Ahava institution in Haifa port. Regarding Beit Yehoshua, Mrs. Szold expressed a negative opinion, and she had similar reservations about the Ahava institution. Nevertheless, upon closing down the transit camps for the Teheran children, children who were known to be religious were sent to those places.

In a book entitled **Youth Aliyah Graduates** (Jerusalem, 1942, 128 pages), by Joseph Horowitz, that was published by Youth Aliyah, we find statistical information as to where the graduates of Youth Aliyah institutions went. In the charts for the year 1939, we find that of twenty-seven graduates who completed their training in Ahava, fifteen went to kibbutzim -- twelve of them to Deganya A. In 1940, of twenty graduates, ten went to kibbutzim -- five of them to Kvutzat Shiller of the Gordonia Group. In the **Youth Aliyah Book**, published by Youth Aliyah, Moshe Kalory, one of the directors of the Ahava institution, published an article entitled "Fifty Years of Hebrew Youth," in which he writes about the institution:

What attracted me to it was the motto of its director and founder, the late Beate Berger: "Training for Zionism, socialism and religious tradition." And religion is equated with Zionism and socialism in the respect that it is flexible. On our staff, there are very religious people and also people with liberal opinions. There are religious **mitzvot** we are

scrupulous about, and some that we ignore. Occasionally, there are differences of opinion even among those whose attitude toward tradition is positive, all the more so among the others. For what could be the yardstick for us in religious matters? I would say our sense of religious tact. We have neither the ability nor the wish to build here a world that is entirely religious. We are convinced that it is possible to transmit and maintain religious values without renewing "Grandma's religion." This sort of flexibility is not easy. It is much easier to follow a fixed pattern, no matter whether it is Rabbi Karo's or Mr. Levin's.

Most of the graduates of our first year, 1934, were educated in the HaBonim movement in pre-Hitler Germany. The orientation of the institution in Berlin was somewhat different from what it is here -- it was more religious. Part of the first graduating class, perhaps the majority, sought their way in the leftist parties -- in HaShomer HaTzair, the leftist Poalei Zion and, perhaps secretly, outside Zionism as well. At the end of April 1936, a group arrived in the middle of our preparations to celebrate the first of May. They refused to participate: "The First of May? A Nazi Holiday! The red flag? A communist symbol! That's not why we came to Palestine!" They did not understand that these symbols are significant in our educational system as well. Only with difficulty did we influence them to participate passively in the dance and to take part in the laborers' parade. A year later, those same members initiated all the arrangements for the First of May celebration. They demanded that the red flag fly over their own house right next to the blue and white flag, and they saw

themselves as an inseparable part of a working, socialist, and kibbutz-oriented Palestine.

When Rabbi Fishman discussed the affair of the Teheran children at a press conference, he included Ahava and Beit Yehoshua among the religious institutions (Davar, May 31). At a press conference which took place on June 10, Mrs. Szold stated that most of the children were sent to religious educational institutions (Hegeh, June 11). This majority can only be obtained if both Ahava and Beit Yehoshua are considered religious institutions.

At that same press conference, Mrs. Szold said, according to the above mentioned Hegeh article:

A few days ago, I visited Beit Alfa, and I saw that the children of the community and the Teheran children have assimilated and become a single unit. Most of them have been freed from their psychological problems.

The truth is that the Polish children of chassidic religious families who are today found in kibbutzim and educational institutions are no different from the other children there. Mrs. Rothenberg, the Agudath Israel **madricha** in K'far HaNoar HaDati, reported: On the first Sabbath after the Teheran children arrived in Yagur, four girls from K'far HaNoar HaDati visited them. The Teheran children in Yagur, greeted them with derision and asked them, "Why do you look so bad? We bet the kosher food there disagrees with you. Do they make you wear side curls? The girls returned from their hike and related sadly, "They work there on the Sabbath; they cook and they travel in cars. We cried at what we saw." Faiga, a **madricha** from Ein Charod who was the coordinator of the transit camp at Beit HaChalutzot in Jerusalem, reported that of all the children absorbed in Ein Charod, only one of them, Yaroslavitz, continues to pray; the rest have stopped.

Youth Aliyot from Other Lands

The smaller groups that came to Palestine from Teheran have made no impression on public opinion, and their fate is not publicly known. Similarly, no attention has been focused on children coming in from other lands. The religious public does not imagine that it must stand on constant guard to see what can be done about children arriving from other countries.

Here is a story of a Jewish lad from Turkey as he himself reported it: Nissim Ashkenazi of Constantinople, the son of a **S'faradi chacham** (rabbi), is 16. He arrived in Palestine through Youth Aliyah on Sukoth 5703. He left Turkey primarily in order to further his Torah study in one of the yeshivot in the Holy Land. The boy fasted several days before he got his immigration certificate and prayed that he might merit going to Palestine to study Torah. Upon his departure, his father cautioned him to be sure to go to a yeshiva. At Immigrant House in Haifa, the boy presented his request to Hans Beit, the administrator of the Youth Aliyah office, and he was told that there are no yeshivot in the Holy Land! The most that they could do for him would be to send him to a place where they do not work on Saturdays. The boy was sent to K'far Hanoar HaDati, where he remained for two months, but he felt very uncomfortable. He was in the habit of praying at great length and reciting many Psalms. The **madrich** explained to him that in Palestine it is not customary to recite Psalms: that is only for poor people in the diaspora; here one must work. They tried to change his mind about going to a yeshiva by telling him that the situation in the yeshivot is terrible. At the end of two months, he fell ill with malaria and was transferred to K'far Chasidim. With the help of Rabbi Kroll, he was accepted in Yeshiva Tifereth Israel in Haifa. He stayed there for two weeks until Eliezer Stern, a **Madrich** from K'far Ha-Noar HaDati, withdrew him from the yeshiva, promising to make arrangements for him

to study in Rabbi Uziel's Yeshiva in Jerusalem. He was, indeed, taken to Jerusalem to the Youth Aliyah office where Mrs. Szold tried to convince him not to attend the Yeshiva. Beit threatened that Youth Aliyah would not support him if he continued to demand Yeshiva education. When he remained firm, Mrs. Szold informed Rabbi Uziel that Youth Aliyah could not pay more than £2 per month for his support. Because of this and because his Torah knowledge was insufficient, Rabbi Uziel told him that he could not find an appropriate yeshiva for him. The Youth Aliyah office sent him to Tel Aviv to the Turkish Immigrants Association where they threatened that he would be sent back to Turkey if he would not stop talking about a yeshiva. Finally they convinced him to go to Givat Brenner promising that he would be able to study Talmud there in peace. When the boy arrived in Givat Brenner, he saw the true situation. He spent a week there, eating only in the senior citizens' kitchen. He left Givat Brenner, decided to forego the aid of the Youth Aliyah office, and went to a yeshiva. He knows very little. But he keeps repeating, "Rabbi Akiva did not begin to learn Torah until he was 40 years old, and he ultimately became the greatest Jewish scholar." He has only one goal: to study Torah.

In the Meir Shefeya institution, children from Baghdad were absorbed. Among them were some from religious homes. At first, they made some religious demands. But in the course of time, they grew accustomed to the situation. One of them, Sason Kaduri Karkoly, was compelled to work on the Sabbath in the stables and also to put on a light. When he refused, the **maurich** Yosef beat him. On August 26, 1942, the boy wrote a letter to Rabbi Herzog, telling him the entire story. Finally, he was transferred to a Mizrahi school.

At the press conference on June 10, Mrs. Szold demanded that the public renew the trust which it originally had for Youth Aliyah in years past. This trust, however, was based on a lack of

knowledge of the true situation. Here are a few reports taken from the **Youth Aliyah Book** published in 1941 in honor of Mrs. Szold's eightieth birthday, which proves the erroneousness of the assumption that the **aliyah** of German youth did not have many instances of compelling children to forego their parents' faith.

Among the articles by the children educated under the aegis of Youth Aliyah, in the section "Sabbath and Holiday", there is one by a boy named Avraham. Apparently from a religious home, he was sent to a place that is extreme in its anti-religious attitude -- Tel Yosef. He related:

In Germany it was perfectly natural for me to celebrate the Passover in its traditional fashion. On the day before the holiday, the atmosphere in the house was completely transformed. Papa prepared all that was necessary for the Seder. As of early that morning, we ate no bread. For lunch we had a quick snack, and that haste gave us a foretaste of the holiday. The first-born son fasted in accordance with the traditional custom. Then came the evening, in honor of which every corner had been cleaned and the house "turned upside down". Everybody in the house inhaled the peace and the pleasantness of the holiday. For the most part we used to invite guests, and the entire family, from the biggest to the smallest, would sit around the table. Papa would tell us about the Exodus from Egypt and then finally the meal would begin.

And now we have the Passover holiday in the kibbutz. The dining room has a festive appearance. The schoolchildren brought the **omer** and through simple actions demonstrated the work in the fields. Instead of traditional questions, the children asked

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questions about current topics. The children prepared the questions in advance and rehearsed them. After several skits, the meal began and this provided additional pleasure. Here I felt the great difference between the two forms of the holiday. In the diaspora, people are tied to the land only in the historical sense and so they celebrate the holiday only in its traditional form. Here in the land, the holiday has a deeper meaning of a bond to the land and to labor, which is why a new form was developed for the holiday.

A second article in that section was written by a boy named Shlomo of Deganya Alef:

At the outset of our renewed lives, we had a strong desire to find an appropriate expression for the holy days and the Sabbath. Our comrades come from a number of different circles; in some homes the traditional form of receiving the Sabbath was the norm, and in some this form was long gone. It was up to us to find a uniform pattern that was appropriate to the spirit of all our comrades and also appropriate to our new situation.

I still remember our first receiving of the Sabbath. All of us gathered around the table. The tablecloth and the flowers added festiveness. We read chapters of the Bible, we sang, and we greeted each other, "Shabbat shalom". We also rose to pray, but this form, did not fit our new reality. True, there was some novelty in the comradeship of sitting together around the table in our white Sabbath garments. That was the framework. But we had to fill it with substance.

In other words, children who had come from homes where

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the traditional Sabbath had been observed were sent to Deganya, and on their very first Sabbath there they still rose to pray.

In her keynote address at a conference of **madrichim** in Haifa in February 1939, Mrs. Szold said:

I am somewhat afraid to bring up another matter. It is difficult to describe this problem. I may not have the sympathy of all those gathered here. I am referring to the problem of the religious. I heard recently that there are religious children in every kibbutz. As you know, we have a questionnaire in the office in Germany, and in the questionnaire we have a question about religious youth — I mean parents who want their children to have a religious education, and the children who request it in their presence. Children aged 16-17 who do not say that they are religious cannot go to a religious kibbutz. Youth at this age can make a decision. Now in many cases the children do not tell the truth. I must admit there is great opposition in Germany to this matter. The rabbis in Germany demand kosher kitchens in all our kibbutzim. I do not agree because I do not believe that religion can be limited to kitchens. The question is, what shall we do?

It should be pointed out that Mrs. Szold is determining here that for children in Germany the age for self-determination begins at age 16, not at 14, as in the case of the Teheran children. And she admits that the children do not tell the truth in this matter. Nevertheless, she found it proper to rely on the statements made by the Teheran children.

Mrs. Deborah Shidletzky, an Agudath Israel **madricha** in the transit camp in Magdiel, reported that when she was on an

excursion with the children in Ashdot Yaakov, the senior citizens there told her group that the Czechoslovakian children who were settled there by Youth Aliyah had been careful in their first few months not to eat nonkosher food and that they used to come to pray. Today, they all eat nonkosher and no longer pray.

Education and Morals

In Alim, published by the Youth Aliyah office, in an article entitled "The Study of History in Youth Groups", Mr. Perla wrote

We are not to show human history as a mere backdrop for the history of the Jewish people, nor to develop the feeling of the "Chosen People."

The **madrich** David Perla (apparently the same man) of Mishmar HaEmek, wrote in an article, "About Problems of Education" in the **Youth Aliyah Book**:

An important place in the psychological revolution of the child regarding Jewish values must surely be assigned to the Bible. The suspicious approach to the Bible, as if it were "religion" with all that that entails -- which was commonplace in diaspora schools -- disappears very quickly with the historical explanation of the Bible and stripping it of its religious dress. The prophet as a social warrior, as a man who sacrifices his life in his war against the established church, as a statesman, as a poet, is not longer the man of G-d of the lesson in religion. The prophecy, the philosophy and the poetry of the Bible are a very deep experience for young people. It is, therefore, not desirable to begin with Genesis and to study the entire Torah, and then proceed to the Earlier Prophets at the expense of the Later Prophets and the Hagiographa. Rather, insofar as the

knowledge of the language permits, the study of these later works should be increased. I have no doubt that at this age it is better to forego the Torah stories and to intensify the study of the poetry in the Prophets and the Hagiographa.

An important and typical detail regarding the moral situation in Youth Aliyah education is a circular sent by Mrs. Szold on March 23, 1937 to all **madrichim**:

From studying the general reports that have been sent to our office by the kibbutzim and from rumors that have spread in the diaspora and have come back to us directly and indirectly, it is clear that the problems of rooms shared by boys and girls in the youth organizations occupies a major part of the youths' dialogues. The results of these dialogues have not been uniform in all places. There are times when the discussions between the staffs and the youths have led to the discontinuation of the custom, and in certain other places it has apparently been continued.

In the course of the last several months, the Youth Aliyah Executive has been dealing with this problem. There have been many discussions with the **madrichim's** organization, with the staffs of a number of places, with psychiatrists, doctors and educators. As a result of these comprehensive discussions, the Executive has come to the conclusion that there is no justification for the custom of sharing rooms. If **madrichim** have educational reasons against shared quarters, I wish to use them to influence the youth to cease and desist from this custom. However, if the staff of **madrichim** does not think as I do, let them rely on this order given by the Executive and based on the opinion of the majority of the psychiatrists with

whom I have consulted on this matter. This arrangement is imperative for the success of our movement in the diaspora.

The emphasis in the last sentence is typical. Nevertheless, it would seem that the categorical stand of the Youth Aliyah office was not effective. On November 5, 1941, circular no. 132 was sent:

As you know, the Youth Aliyah office has, on different occasions, requested of the *madrachim's* organization and of individual *madrachim*, to discuss, explain, or arrive at decisions concerning shared quarters by boys and girls. You know that from the day it was founded till this very day the Youth Aliyah office has taken a specific stand on this question and it has not changed its views even after arguments, demands, the pedagogical reasoning provided by certain *madrachim*, and even in the light of the same demands made by the youths themselves. This office has examined and discovered that all these educational reasons are really pseudo-educational. This opinion of ours receives justification and fortification from professionals with whom we have consulted. From the beginning to this very day, our stand has been against this custom.

Our opinion is that this question is not merely a matter of the educational system within the framework of Youth Aliyah, but that it is a general problem of life in this land. Perhaps, insofar as the lives of maturing youth are concerned, it is possible to say that the question is a general social and educational one....

This is a letter by a *madrich* of Beth HaShita, Aryeh Ben-Gurion, a man who was found fit to serve as the coordinating

madrich in the Magdiel Transit Camp for the Teheran children.

"Dear Mrs. Szold,

"We have received your letter about the subject of shared rooms, and we wish to explain:

"Our young people are for the most part 19 years old. The boys, and the girls as well, did not bring up the question before. However, upon the completion of their training, with their compulsory unification, they stated their request to live now as it will be natural to live in two months from now -- in mixed units. Just as in many other areas of life, it is our obligation as *madrachim* to direct them gradually from a preparatory stage to a stage of independence -- to their future lives. And now they are on the threshold. We have accepted their opinion that this tension of theirs not be extended until the day when at some factory somewhere they will move into regular accommodations where they will live mixed; but that right here, under our supervision and with our knowledge let the matter be done. In fact, that way they will come to their senses sooner. We, the *madrachim*, personally have an opinion, and we have relayed it to the students -- that there is nothing positive or beneficial about living together, even for mature members of the settlement. Not always, however, is the opinion based on adult experience accepted. Now, after they have been living together for a month, we can testify (and the boys tell us this as well) that the initial tension has passed and even they see no purpose in this. And so, haven't we furthered the children's experience for the future?

"Their lives are pleasant in their homes; social

warmth reigns in every room. The vulgarity of the boys (which is natural in a room with three boys) has been reined in. The atmosphere is much more refined and cultured than it was before, and I have no doubt that the young people will have many other details to add in favor of this step.

"However, if the office will inform us -- in absolute and categorical terms -- we will accept its decision and attempt through explanations sessions with the young people to put matters back on their original footing (despite the fact that this will detract from some part of natural truth and from the sense of accomplishment).

"I hope that after the matter is brought up before the group, they and the kibbutz committee will sum up their opinion in writing to you, and relate what led them to their conclusions, and how they regard your opinion.

"A personal request: I would very much like to know and understand the background and the educational causes (not the formal ones) which obligate youth, above the age of 18, in the latter part of their training, not to live the way people around them and other people their age do (in training programs for the Scouts and for Working Youth).

"With hope and blessing,
"Aryeh Ben-Gurion"

The kibbutz custom of men and women sharing bedrooms was not the only factor that inspired the youth being educated within these kibbutzim to accept and imitate the local custom. The general attitudes toward sexual morality, widespread in the kibbutzim, also became part of the attitude of the youth. These

attitudes were expressed honestly by one of the leading speakers and thinkers of HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, Mr. Y. Schweiger, writing in *Dapim Mibifnim*, the publication of HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, in an article titled, "That Which is not Spoken About". Not only attitudes, but also the reality of kibbutz life is revealed to us by his words:

In our circles, the circles of the laborers here, we have attained or have almost attained a level of culture which makes it morally possible for an unmarried mother to live among us without our trampling on her soul with our dirty boots....

Our moral cognition asserts and demands: every child has a right to motherhood and to fatherhood, a clear right and an equal right. But the very same cognition demands from us: every man and every woman has the right to determine with free will not only when he wants a child but also from whom he wants that child. And this personal right is a constant one; it is never revocable, and it can never be terminated.... The combination of these two moral obligations, compels us to liberate motherhood and fatherhood from the complications and demands of family life and to limit them to their single natural focus -- the child. In other words, it obligates us to live a lifestyle in which the child -- with all of his rights and with all the obligations that we have towards him -- should never be the cause that forces a relationship or obligates the continuation of a specialized mutual relationship between a man and a woman, along with the monopolistic aspects that the moral obligation of a family carries with it.

As to the child himself, what's so terrible if a child

on a kibbutz will say, "Moishele and I have one mother, but my father is Yosef and Moshe's father is David"? Or he will say, "Chayele and I have one father, but my mother is Rachel and Chayale's mother is Devorah"? This will not cause the child any psychological damage. The family terminology, the demand that children share a single father and a single mother if they are brothers and sisters is a concept that we inculcate into the minds of the children.

The Youth Aliyah office organized a seminar for **madrachim** and published assorted lectures as booklets that were sent out to all the institutions in which Youth Aliyah youngsters are educated. In 1937, Mr. Golan's lecture, "The Literature of Problems of Sex Education," and Mr. Z. Zohar's lecture, "Sex Education" were published. Both demanded liberation from all "preconceived notions of morality" and that children be trained for sexual life. Golan reported that he translated Houdin's book **Boy and Girl** into Hebrew:

...but it was banned by the government, to no small degree due to the influence of the school principals in the country who found it amoral and unfit to be used as a basis for sexual education.

Nevertheless, in his lecture he recommended that this book be given to youth to read, calling it a positive work.

What is the character of the children in the kibbutzim with whom the Teheran children are blending? In **MiBifnim**, the publication of HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, Mr. Maltz wrote:

In a report issued recently about the school at Ein Charod, one teacher, whom I do not consider a great sentimentalist, put it that our children are very "dry", tough. The aged, the weak arouse only their scorn....

They do not respect any person. They have almost

no respect for any value, for any moral imperative. Even the ancient possessions of our nation, which Jewry has sanctified, which generations have give their lives for, are not understood by them. They feel no closeness to them. The Sabbath in its ancient Jewish form is not only not theirs as it is not ours, but they are incapable of penetrating it, of standing in awe before the spiritual greatness revealed in it, or before the lofty Jewish self-sacrifice for the sanctity of the Sabbath day.

Together with this teacher, we all stood stunned and shocked at that children's celebration when two of them presented an original improvisation: The meeting of two old men -- and their conversation about our desecration of the Sabbath. I, for one, shuddered: Are these our children? Where do this cynicism and scorn toward old men and toward the Sabbath, which has been sanctified throughout all the generations of Jewry come from? Are our children really so far removed?

To this, Mr. Michaeli replied in **MiBifnim**:

If today our fathers were to find us "poor and empty", if they would regard our Sabbath as desecrated, if they would see our Passover as **chometz**, if they would see our Yom Kippur without fasting or self-denial, they would surely be shocked and we would credit their questions, "Are our children really so far removed?" But we who have retained none of their deeds, why should we complain about our children? Can we demand from our children something that we never gave them?

This is the framework into which the Teheran children were placed. These are the educational policies determined by the

Youth Aliyah office. Mrs. Szold explained her activities at a press conference reported in *Davar* of June 11, as follows:

Even though she wants religious education for all Jewish children, she cannot ignore the Palestinian reality or the rights of the pioneer movements which have done great work in building up the land and in educating the younger generation.

In an editorial in *HaBoker* of June 14, Mr. P. B. wrote:

Mrs. Szold reported that she personally thinks every child ought to receive a traditional education. However, upon considering the reality in Palestine and realizing the great privileges earned by the nonreligious organizations in building up the land, it was determined to divide up these souls half and half, 50% to traditional education and 50% to anti-religious education. This division strikes us as extremely surprising. Do we really have the right to decree upon half the children coming to Palestine that they are to receive in the land of our forefathers an education opposed to everything that our forefathers considered sacred for the past 4,000 years, just because the anti-religious among us have fully organized settlements? We, too, continue to prefer an agricultural education above any other education. But if we must pay so dear a price for it, then our loss is greater than our gain.

Absorption Places that were Disqualified

The Youth Aliyah office, which approved the leftist kibbutzim and their educational institutions as suitable to educate the Polish children, actively disqualified the Agudath Israel institutions and the absorption places that Agudath Israel prepared independently with its own funds. It disqualified them without even examining them. But the Youth

Aliyah office could not tell Agudath Israel that it was disqualifying its institutions without explaining why. So it made its point in the most blatant manner: The thirty children that it approved for Agudath Israel were sent to kibbutzim in K'far Saba and in Gedera, where Youth Aliyah groups had previously been settled.

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Chapter VIII

The Reaction of Diaspora Jews

The affair of the Teheran children caught the attention of the Jewish public in Palestine and abroad to an extraordinary degree. It stirred the minds and roused the wrath of all segments of the nation. The great suffering that was the lot of these children, the fact that they were rescued from the pyre of Jewry being destroyed in Poland, the very last remnants of hundreds of thousands of religious children who had been murdered with every conceivable cruelty -- these facts aroused the mercy, sympathy, and love of the rest of Jewry for them. All of us saw ourselves as responsible for these children, as the recipients of a precious and sacred charge; all wished to pour bounty upon them so as to erase from their memories the horrors of their past. Concern for the weak bodies of these children was evident among all circles of Jewry. The only debate which ultimately became polemical and then turned into a Kulturkampf concerned their education. Differences of opinion and questions as to what kind of education these children should receive arose only in Palestine. In the diaspora, even Jews who had deserted the Torah demanded religious education for the Polish children. The great fear and concern of Orthodox Jewry in the Holy Land at seeing the children torn away from all that was sacred to their parents was shared by all parties and all ideologies among the diaspora Jews. Even the secular parties of Jewry did not support their colleagues in the Holy Land on the question of the Teheran children. Only in Palestine was Orthodox Jewry isolated in its demands. In the diaspora, even Jews who did not keep the Torah understood that the education the Jewish people provides for its orphans can only be training in the Torah and for fulfillment of the commandments.

The Reaction in Palestine

The leftist newspapers were all united in a single chorus -- derogatory and hate-filled, concerning religious education. They announced clearly that the children would receive a secular education "as is customary" in Palestine.

In the chapter headed "The Mizrachi", we have seen to what degree the Mizrachi joined this chorus. A few articles appeared in the nonreligious press which attempted to deal with the issue somewhat objectively. In Ha'Aretz of March 16, 1943, M. B. wrote under the heading "Notes in Pencil":

The ancient Romans used to approach problems with a quotation from Cicero, "Who stands to gain from this?" This question has been troubling me these last few weeks, ever since strange details have become public about the attitude-toward the Teheran children on the part of their **madrachim**. Originally in Teheran, later en route to Palestine, and finally here, too. The **madrachim**, who for some reason are mostly members of HaShomer HaTzair, are accused -- to speak somewhat politely -- of an improper attitude toward the religious sensitivities of the children, most of whom received a fully religious education in the homes of their parents in Poland. The **madrachim** compelled them to violate the customs of the Jewish faith not only in secondary matters, such as the covering of the head, but also in major matters for which religious Jews are willing to sacrifice their lives, such as the observance of the Sabbath and the eating of kosher food. Even if we were to assume that the accusations in this matter as they appear in **Kol Yisrael** and in **HaTzofeh** are exaggerated, nevertheless, there is **some truth** in them according to the adage, "Where there's smoke there's fire." And even "some

truth" is sufficient to bring up the above question.

In a meeting at the home of Mr. Hofian in Tel Aviv (Ha'Aretz of March 5), we heard Mrs. Szold appeal to the community at large to volunteer and to provide the money required to support the Teheran children and other children such as those who have arrived from Hungary and for whom there will be no outside support such as the £4 per child in the case of the Polish refugees. And you ask yourself: Is all this "noise" -- as Mrs. Szold labeled it -- about this matter likely to increase public contributions? We have no statistics such as those of the Gallup Institute in the United States, on the relationship of the Palestine community to matters religious; for, after all, not all non-Orthodox Jews are really of one kind. And even if they are not particularly interested in education in the spirit of Agudath Israel or even of the Mizrachi, they are much less interested in an education in the spirit of HaShomer HaTzair or Mapai. Why? Because Agudath Israel pupils, and certainly those of Mizrachi, are more likely to become not only members of Mapai, but also members of HaShomer HaTzair than the reverse. Many non-Orthodox believe: Let the children receive a religious education, so that even if they should liberate themselves from it with the passage of time, there'll be something left in them, at least a trace of Torah and of fear of G-d.

It is possible not to agree with this point of view. But one's point of view influences his pursestrings, and it is extremely difficult to get purses to open for contributions of any kind. The same is true for the vast Jewish public in the United States. About a year ago, Mr. Y. Mereminsky, a member of Mapai, visited

the United States as an emissary for the Histadrut of Palestine. He published a letter in the Jewish newspapers of the United States in which he described the care the Histadrut uses in dealing with religious sensitivities of its members. It is not now important whether this caution is real or not; what is important is that an emissary of the Histadrut found it necessary, even in America, to emphasize this so as not to offend Jews, who are half, or a third, or a quarter Orthodox and not to keep them from taking part in appeals on behalf of Palestine. Simultaneously, here, in Palestine, the Histadrut has agreed to include in the constitutions for work offices a paragraph that general meetings will not be held on Sabbath days and on Jewish holy days so that religious members can also participate.

When I read all the polemics on this subject, I am reminded of an essay by Achad Ha'Am (Goel Chadash) which was written against J. Reinach, one of the great leaders of French Jewry, who published a series of articles proposing a solution to the Jewish problem in Eastern Europe. Reinach proposed two little amendments: 1. The annulment of the Sabbath day and 2. permitting the eating of pork. Now Achad Ha'Am was far from a clericalist. Today, though, HaShomer HaTzair puts into practice what Reinach preached, whereas we don't have a new Achad Ha'Am to fight it.

I recall the great orphanage in the city of Odessa. That this city was not particularly known for its orthodoxy is testified to by the adage, "For seven leagues around Odessa, the fire of Gehinom burns." Nevertheless, its public institutions maintained

Jewish tradition. This orphanage received half its budget from the community treasury and the other half of its budget from the contributions of wealthy people and private donors. The supervisory commission included representatives of both groups. This writer, as a representative of the community in the supervisory commission, knows this at first hand. Famous doctors, engineers and lawyers participated in the supervisory commission, and the orphanage had its own synagogue where all the children prayed three times every day together with their teachers. When the principal was free, he too would come to pray. Needless to say, the food was kosher in every respect, and the Sabbath and the holy days were observed. I call as witness, Mr. A. Zusman, now in Nachalat Yehuda. The orphanage also had an agricultural farm outside the city of Odessa, a school for teaching agriculture to the older orphans, and Zusman was its principal. Even this farm had its own synagogue, etc., etc. The supervisory commission applied the following principle: "We are responsible for the orphans. Let us provide them, while they are in the orphanage, a traditional Jewish education. When they get older and leave the orphanage walls, they will be free to choose their own way of life."

What was primary for these public minded citizens in the diaspora is not even secondary for our leaders here.

"Who stands to gain from this?"

In Haboker of April 8, 43 in an editorial headlined "Heresy" Y-n wrote

It is no longer to be kept a secret, in fact it seems to us that we ought to scream about this as you do

about any other plague. We are witnesses to a rise in heresy in our lives, to a growth of deliberate atheism as one of the principles of public life. In the wake of the polemics around the subject of the Teheran children, in wake of the argument in the National Assembly about the budget for the Chief Rabbinate, in the wake of a variety of conflicts in the area of education and schools, the heretical character of the generation now growing up in this land becomes more and more blatant. We are not standard bearers of religion, nor is it our purpose here to demand that people be more scrupulous in fulfilling the Torah's commandments. Much has been written and much has been said about the place of religion in the life of the Jewish people, and the daily press is not an appropriate forum for such discussions. But whatever our attitude on this question, no matter how liberal we may be in the contrast to the religious parties, we cannot consent to the notion that the Jewish people of all nations should turn into a nation without a G-d, without a tradition, and without any respect for values that have been sanctified for thousands of years. We cannot consent that in the new Jewish settlement in Palestine, of all places, the Sabbath should be forgotten or that the synagogue should disappear, or that there should be no sign of the Jewish people's holy days. Perhaps there were always Jews who were not careful in the observance of all the laws of the Sabbath, but even the atheists of yesteryear would have been shocked if someone would have told them that there are people who would want to annul the institution of the Sabbath in its entirety. We cannot deny the fact that here, in our Hebrew Yishuv which is supposed to serve as a

nucleus for the resurrection of our people there are groups which strive to educate the generation in a spirit of apathy toward the Sabbath -- or of totally ignoring it as well as anything else that is linked to Jewish religion.

The affair of the Teheran children is a typical example of this. If we study this affair carefully, we must cry out, "We are the most shameful of people!" Did the Polish nation which brought these Polish orphans from Teheran ever confront the problems that we have to deal with here? Was there ever any doubt in the minds of the Polish educators that the children they were taking care of had to read their prayers every day and attend their church at least every Sunday? No doubt the Poles also have atheists among them, people who never attend church, but what an individual may allow himself to do as an individual is not something that must be permitted for the public at large. We have yet to hear of Poles demanding that atheism be considered the basis for national life. On the contrary, it is their common religion that strengthens the unity of the nation and gives it hope in dark days that ultimately redemption will come. Nevertheless, among us there are some who demand at all cost, that the children gathered in by the Jewish People be educated explicitly in an anti-religious spirit. And the people who demand this speak loudly and furiously. It is not a good sign for the Jewish people that such an ill cross-wind can blow through it at a time of major catastrophe unparalleled in Jewish history. In the life of every nation there may be periods of apathy to religion, perhaps even periods of open rebellion or of spiteful rebellion against all that is holy. But these incidents take place

generally only at times of satiety and plenty wealth and happiness in the purely temporal sense make one forget and push aside "matters divine", matters of faith and ethics. Now are we so wealthy in this Yishuv that rebellion and atheism must rule? Does not the fate of the Jewish people at this time, if anything, require a certain refinement of spirit, a tendency toward faith, toward all those spiritual forces that provided us the concept of Jewish eternity? This tendency is not clericalism. It does not postulate an inquisition in the name of religion, but it cannot co-exist with brutish, stupid atheism which tramples all that is holy out of chutzpa and ignorance, an atheism so vociferous as to demand that children be taught that there is no G-d, and that all who claim otherwise are idiots or clericalists who make a living out of religion or hypocrites who are deceiving the public for their own benefit. It seems to us that we must discuss seriously and at great length the issue of meaningless, brutal atheism which is spreading among us.

In a HaAretz editorial April 28 we read:

There is no need to tell the readers of HaAretz that all the arrangements for the children from Teheran have been greatly criticized in broad circles of the Yishuv, non-Orthodox as well as Orthodox. There is a demand to institute an investigation, and if one has not yet taken place, the responsibility lies with the general work pattern of the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem.

From the first day that what was happening to the immigrant children became public knowledge, it has been clear that our soul-snatching parties and the institutions under their control have been dragging

themselves and all of us into the mud. The good people responsible for what has taken place must now find a way out of this mud.

Ha-Aretz and **HaBoker** are two newspapers loyal to the Jewish Agency. But the scandal reached such proportions that even they were compelled to react editorially.

It is unnecessary to emphasize the tempest stirred up among Orthodox Jews upon hearing what was being done to the children in Teheran and in the camps. Not only organized Orthodoxy as represented by Agudath Israel, but also other Orthodox Jews, those who normally keep a distance from public matters, were shocked and rallied round the Agudath Israel leaders whom they saw as dedicated to this sacred issue. Agudath Israel did not stop at verbal protests and reactions, but proceeded to establish Mifal Lemaan Yaldei Yisrael, whose function was to establish absorption places and provide **madritchim** for the immigrant children. On January 21, 1943, the Agudath Israel World Executive published its announcement of the establishment of the Mifal:

The terrifying holocaust which has now come upon the Jewish people is most horrifyingly expressed in the suffering of our young and infants. That great enemy who has no peer among all those who have risen up against the Jewish people from the day it became a people, seeks to destroy and annihilate, G-d forbid, all of Jewry -- children, infants and youth. There are no words in human language to describe the suffering of the Jewish children who are being killed and butchered in horrible cruelty by the thousands and the tens of thousands. Hundreds of thousands have been taken into captivity in shocking circumstances and suffer cold and hunger, hiding out in forests, wandering along devastated highways, and

being taken to distant lands in the east and the north of Europe.

At the initiative and under the spiritual guidance of the great rabbis and the righteous leaders of our generations, we have founded Mifal Lemaan Yaldei Yisrael, an organization on behalf of Jewish children about which we presently are notifying the Jewish Yishuv in the Holy Land and Jews abroad throughout the diaspora.

This program of Orthodox Jewry will deal with the rescue of our children, with educating them traditionally. It will be father and mother to the orphans and will provide for all their physical and spiritual needs.

A sacred obligation lies upon the Jewish people, on the public in general, and upon each individual to save this unfortunate generation of our children for original, pure Jewry. This is a sacred obligation and its influence will be felt in the future, too. We, in our pain, in our anguish, in our individual mourning for the souls of our dear departed ones, have an obligation to do what we can to save the remnants of Jewry, especially these children, not merely the bodies but the spirit of the nations as well, the spirit of Grandfather Israel, the spirit of the Torah, the spirit that beat in the hearts of the martyred parents of these precious children of ours, the spirit of Polish Jewry, of Lithuanian Jewry, of Hungarian Jewry, and the Jewries of all the other lands of Europe, today captive and trampled.

In the merit of this sacred mitzva, may G-d have mercy upon his people and send us a speedy redemption.

The chassidic rabbis of Ger, Tchoortkov, Sadigora, Pshemishel, Zlotopolya; the Torah giants, among them, the author of Chazon Ish, Rabbi Iser Zalman Meltzer, Rabbi Soloveitchik of Brisk, Rabbi Kahaneman of Pontevezh, Rabbi Sofer of Pressburg, Rabbi Sorotzkin of Lutzk, Rabbi Marcus of Haifa, Rabbi Katz of Petach Tikva, Rabbi Finkel, head of the Mirrer Yeshiva, Rabbi Sarna, head of the Chevron Yeshiva were the first to contribute to this organization and encouraged the public to help in every way possible. Special meetings were held by the women's and youth groups of Agudath Israel.

Meetings were held for the general public throughout the Yishuv. At every meeting, the gathering protested vigorously against the base plots of the Jewish Agency and did everything in their power to encourage Mifal Lemaan Yaldei Yisrael. In the previous chapter, we reported on all the absorption places established by the Mifal which were empty of children.

On March 9, 1943, a meeting of all the rabbis of the Holy Land took place in the offices of Agudath Israel in Tel Aviv, dedicated to the subject of the Teheran children. One hundred rabbis, rebbes, and deans of yeshivos, participated. After long deliberation and after hearing testimony from the immigrant children themselves, the following resolutions were passed:

The conference of rebbes, rabbis and deans of yeshivos from all of Palestine has heard in deep shock a report about the hundreds of thousands of martyrs, holy and pure Jews, who were murdered in sanctification of G-d's holy Name throughout all the lands of Europe; and about the destruction of the centers of Jewry, the synagogues and the holy yeshivos. Earth! Do not cover their blood! Woe unto us! Who will replace them!

The nations of the world have remained apathetic

in the face of the shedding of blood of young and old. They have been content to protest verbally, but have not yet saved a single Jewish soul. Our brethren, all the house of Jewry -- man's ability to save is illusory. We have no one to rely on other than our Father in Heaven, for His mercies are inexhaustible. He will hasten our redemption and will redeem us forever. Let us learn from the signs given us in these awesome days; let us return to Him with all our hearts; let us observe His Torah, written and oral, and His commandments; let us educate our sons and our daughters in the spirit of Grandfather Israel, for we have nothing left but this Torah.

The assemblage declares: It has always been a fact in the Jewish history that the education of Jewish children lies in the hands of the rabbis -- those who bear the standard of the Torah and fear of G-d -- especially the education of orphans has been in the hands of the Jewish courts, "the father of the orphans." We, therefore, find it obligatory upon us to make the following resolutions:

1. The rabbinical assemblage is convinced about the truth of the shameful deeds performed by the **madrichim** in Teheran and aboard ship on the way to Palestine, taking horrible advantage of the unfortunate immigrant children and forcing them to desecrate the Jewish faith by such acts as eating nonkosher food, desecrating the Sabbath and Yom Kippur, and preventing them from saying **kaddish** -- the sole consolation left to these orphans -- as part of their scoffing at all that is holy to Jewry. The assemblage emphasizes that this constitutes open

warfare against the Jewish faith; it is the most horrifying of inquisitions. We vigorously protest and deplore those who sent these emissaries, the institutions that appointed **madrichim** to uproot the Jewish faith.

2. The rabbinical assemblage views the setting-up of transit camps in an atmosphere where all that is sacred is desecrated, where the same evil **madrichim** from Teheran work together with local **madrichim** who deliberately and systematically violate the faith. We view this as a continuation of the goal of uprooting the children from their faith. We demand that all these misleaders and seducers be kept out of the camps. "Do not touch my anointed ones."

3. The rabbinical assemblage, upon hearing that they are planning to classify and distribute the children to religious and nonreligious groups, asserts in accord with Torah opinion that it is forbidden to make such classifications. The law of the Torah, obligates Jewry to educate every single child: to teach him Torah and to teach him a craft in the manner of Torah and G-d's commandments. The Sages emphasize that the responsibility for the education of orphans lies upon the rabbis -- "the fathers of the orphans". In accord with their instructions, the children are to be educated within a Torah framework, the kind of education that has traditionally been transmitted for generations upon generations.

4. The assemblage calls upon all the rabbis and upon all other Jews in Palestine to join in its determination to save the unfortunate children from spiritual assimilation, to provide them with a Torah

education, and to do everything possible to rouse public opinion in Palestine and abroad. The Teheran children are the first of tens of thousands of orphans dispersed all over Europe who will, G-d willing, follow them to the Holy Land. Just as a child at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple declared, so do these children declare to us in these days of destruction, "Who gave Jacob for spoils, Israel to plunder? G-d to whom we have sinned!" Irreligious education is the root of all the bitter and poisonous growths we are suffering from. It has brought about the spiritual nadir of our generation. It is the source of the holocaust that has befallen us. In the merit of having these innocent children trained according to the Torah, may G-d cure our ills and send us our righteous Messiah speedily in our days, Amen!

The assemblage calls upon all the Jews living in Palestine, and in particular upon the institutions that are dealing with making arrangements for the children, to pay heed to our requests and prevent at this last minute a civil war, a "Kulturkampf" between brothers, the results of which no one can foresee. The terrible situation of the Jewish people demands that there be unity and peace among us.

5. The assemblage expresses its full support of "Mifal Lemaan Yaldei Yisrael", established by the Agudath Israel Executive. We request of all rabbis and all those concerned with the public benefit to dedicate all their energies to the success of this organization upon which the saving of these children's souls depends.

6. The assemblage after receiving reports of the

activities of the Agudath Israel Executive on behalf of the spiritual rescue of the children, approved all the steps it has taken and requested that it continue to be on the alert.

7. The assemblage expresses its satisfaction with the dedicated work of yeshiva students and various Agudah youth organizations and encourages them to continue their present activities.

The assemblage elected a rabbinical commission to deal with the issue of immigrant children. It included the chassidic rebbes of Ger, Tchortkov, Sadegora, and Pshemishi; the author of **Chazon-Ish**, the Rabbi of Brisk, the Rabbi of Ponievezh, the Rabbi of Pressburg, the Rabbi of Lutzk, the Rabbi of Krimik, the Rabbi of Latchovitz, and the Rabbi of Nierenberg, and the heads of the yeshivoh of Mir, Slobodka, and Slonim.

Yeshiva students published the following:

The Sacred Scream

In the name of thousands of young people who are studying in yeshivos, we protest vigorously the satanic plot to uproot from their faith the children of martyrs who arrived in this country recently, most of whom come from very Orthodox homes and who sacrificed their health and risked their lives to maintain the traditions of their fathers during their years of wandering.

We feel great responsibility for the future of these Torah-educated children, especially in view of the dangers lying in wait for their spiritual future and the result of the influence of the transit camps in which the sacred Torah values are being desecrated. The fact remains that of 120 **madrichim** only seven are concerned with the kind of pure Jewish education suitable for Polish Jewry.

We demand that the children be given over without delay to Orthodox educators and **madrichim**, in accord with their own wish and that of their martyred parents. Let no strange hand touch what is holy and desecrate this sacred trust.

We openly declare that we shall rise up as one to rescue our children for Torah and for Torah living. The Holy Land will rock and the world with it.

We are prepared to wage a Torah-war until G-d's justice will come out to light.

Signed

Students of the following yeshivos:
Eitz Chaim, Sefas Emes, Toras Chaim, Chevron
Kneses Yisroel, Kneses Yitzchok Kamenitz, Beis Yosef, Petach Tikva, Heichal HaTalmud of Tel Aviv,
Kol Torah, Beis Yosef Zvi, Chayey Olam, Toras Emes.

On the Fast of Esther, March 20, in Jerusalem, a mass meeting of yeshiva students and their deans took place dedicated to saving the Teheran children from being educated as atheists.

The meeting was called with the approval of the Torah giants of the country and with the participation of the following yeshivos: Eitz Chayim, Chevron, Petach Tikva, Sefas Emes, Chayey Olam, Beis Yosef Zvi, Heichal HaTalmud, Toras Chaim, Toras Emes, Chasan Sofer, Ketav Sofer, Shevet Sofer, Meah Shearim, Kneses Beis Yitzchok Kamenitz, Beis Yosef Novardok, Ohel Torah, Tiferes Zvi, Mekor Chaim, Merkaz Beis Yosef of Tel Aviv, Beis Yosef Novardok of Bnei Brak, Kolel Eitz Yosef, Kolel Nachalas Shimon, Kolel Adereth Yosef of Tel Aviv, and representatives of many other yeshivos throughout the land.

The meeting was crowned by the participation and presence

of the following deans of yeshivos and Torah leaders: Rabbi Iser Zalman Meltzer, Rabbi Akiva Sofer, Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap, Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman of Ponievizh, Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Finkel of Mir, Rabbi Shabsai Yogel of Slonim, Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna, Rabbi Asher Zeev Werner of Tiberias, Rabbi Yechiel Tukachinsky, Rabbi Yaakov Henoch Sankevitch, Rabbi Eliahu Dushnitzer of Petach Tikva, Rabbi Moshe Leib Shapiro, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Wachtfogel, Rabbi Yeshaya Winograd, Rabbi Moshe Bernstein, Rabbi Nathan Raanan, Rabbi Hillel Vitkin, Rabbi Aharon Weinstein, Rabbi Shmuel Eidselsak, Rabbi Moshe Chevroni, Rabbi Eliezer Menachem Shach, Rabbi Aharon Chodosh, Rabbi Matityahu Shtzizgal of Bnei Brak, and Rabbi Yehoshua Huradner, Rabbi Meir Karelitz, Rabbi Israel Moshe Salomon of Charkov, Rabbi Moshe Chaskin of Priluki, and many other prominent Torah leaders. Greetings were received from the rabbi of Ger, Rabbi Dushinsky, and others. After speeches by Rabbi Iser Zalman Meltzer and Rabbi Kahaneman of Ponievizh, and after hearing testimony from one of the Teheran children, a lengthy discussion was held. The following resolutions were passed:

1. The national conference of students and alumni of yeshivos, headed by the deans of the yeshivos and the other great Torah scholars of the land representing the yeshivos where Torah, which is the last and sole pleasure left to us by G-d, is studied, have heard with great shock the horrifying details of the deaths of hundreds of thousands of holy and pure martyrs. May G-d avenge them. They were butchered and murdered throughout Europe with the most horrible cruelty in sanctification of G-d's name. Earth, earth, do not cover their blood! The apathy so typical of the world's nations regarding this genocide shows we cannot rely on others. Man's assistance is illusory. Let us return with all our hearts to G-d and his Torah.

and He will hasten our eternal redemption.

2. The conference praised the G-d of Jewry, its Redeemer and Protector in times of difficulty. It blesses and greets from the depths of its heart our young brothers whom through G-d's help, we have been privileged to see come to join us in Palestine.
3. The conference has heard, with great shock, the horrible details of the awful deeds perpetrated by the **madrichim** who deliberately misled the children of these martyrs when they were in Teheran and aboard ship on their way to Palestine, and the entire system of how they are being treated in the camps in this land. We declare that there is a clear plan to uproot everything that is holy and precious from these Jewish children. The conference hereby expresses its vigorous protest against this shameful behavior and against the institutions that appointed these misleading **madrichim**.
4. The conference asserts that Polish Jewry, in educating its children, whether it was education for Torah or training for a craft or a trade, constantly sought an atmosphere that was saturated with Torah and fear of G-d in their purest form. This wholesome education must, therefore, be given to their children. This we demand immediately for the children from Teheran who have already arrived here and for all those who will, G-d willing, arrive later. They must all be placed under the supervision and direction of the great Torah leaders of the nation who have arrived from the diaspora, such as the Rebbe of Ger and the Gaon of Brisk, long may they live, for only they are truly the "fathers of the orphans" and only they would Polish Jewry have trusted in all matters concerning the education of their children.

5. This conference regards the Torah leaders in Palestine and abroad as the sole people responsible for the spiritual peace of these children and of those yet to come with G-d's help. It therefore calls out to all Torah leaders wherever they are, "Do not be silent! Participate! Remain in constant touch and constantly concerned for the total education of the children of these martyrs!"

6. The conference declares that only a traditional education, the ancient Jewish form, was the basis of our existence, and with it we have traversed an exile of nearly two thousand years, and in its merits we will ultimately be redeemed. We turn to all who are dealing with the issue of the education of the children to accept upon themselves the leadership of the Torah giants and to help them save the children from spiritual assimilation, from being brought up contrary to our sacred Torah, to be sure they are raised in accordance with the will of their martyred parents, whose blood calls out to us, "Do not sin against our children whom we have entrusted to you to educate in our spirit."

7. The conference turns to all those who support the Torah and fear of G-d to analyze in depth this terrible tragedy in view of the danger of total spiritual annihilation that now threatens the rest of Jewry, G-d forbid, a result of the destruction of the great yeshivos -- the repositories of Judaism. The faith that has been transmitted through them by the holy people from generation to generation must stand us in good stead to expand their activities on behalf of the Torah now more than ever; to serve as powerful illuminators, providing faith and encouragement and dependence

on G-d for the masses of the Jewish people being intimidated by their murderers.

8. The conference of yeshiva students declares: Let this cry of warning be heard from here by all the Jewish people living in the Holy Land and wherever Jews may be in the diaspora, to all those responsible for this treasure that we are in charge of: These children are not free for all. Any betrayal of trust will shock and upset the entire anguished and suffering Jewish world, as well as the good and gentle among the Gentiles. We swear - even though we have limited ourselves to the bounds of the houses of Torah and morality, the yeshivos, nevertheless, when it is time to act for G-d, one ignores even the Torah. We will find and use whatever means are necessary to arouse every sensitive heart that still has within it a spirit of humanity to see to it that the will, the sole will of our martyred brethren is fulfilled in its entirety.

And now we address our younger brothers, the captives who have come in from the exile. We have heard and have seen all of your great heroism and the difficult test you have suffered through and are still suffering in your daily lives. Your sacred heroism has in no way shamed the glory of the tradition of your holy forefathers. We are proud of you! Continue this with great strength, and in your merit we, too, shall be redeemed.

Thus did the Torah leaders and the students of the yeshivos - people who keep away from all political affairs, people who do not move out of the tents of Torah -- endorse the activities and the stand of Agudath Israel. In accord with the opinion of Agudath Israel, and in opposition to the opinion of Mizrachi, they emphasized that the supervision of the education of these

children must be given to the Torah leaders and that it is forbidden to grant children, even though aged over 14, the option to determine the nature of their education.

The Jewish Agency people, among them the Mizrahi leaders, paid no attention to the demands of the Orthodox public. They ignored the opinions of the leaders of Jewry and made fun of the feelings of Torah Jewry. The peak of their scoffing was reached when they divided up the children. On April 15th, the World Executive of Agudath Israel published the following declaration:

The negotiations of Agudath Israel with the Jewish Agency, which have dragged out over three months, have achieved no results. Its many promises to show understanding for the Agudath demands were not kept, and the orphans from Teheran, the refugees of hell, were handed over, for the most part, to nonreligious education, education that has neither Torah nor Judaism, in opposition to the protests of Orthodox Jewry and in opposition to the will of the martyred parents of these children. The taking of the children away from religion, the deliberate inciting of the children against Agudath Israel, begun in Teheran are continuing to this very moment....

We have evidence and case histories of children being forced to act against their religious training. Matrichim of assorted ideologies -- all united against the Torah -- caused confusion and great disturbance in the minds of the children. Agudath Israel's protests against the arrangement of the children in these transit camps were not heeded.

Children like these, who have suffered privation and wandering, are psychologically and physically upset. Yet the Jewish Agency's Youth Aliyah division

saw fit to present them with a questionnaire on their "Perspectives of Life." This questioning session turned into a joke. Children of six and seven years were asked to which party they wish to belong.

Agudath Israel opposed this ridiculous questioning even for children above the age of 14, all the more so for children below that age. Had the Agudah warning been heeded, all this lunatic propaganda which caused so much awful confusion in the minds of the children would never have taken place.

After two months of efforts to uproot every religious instinct in the minds and the hearts of these children, after those famous excursions through the Jezreel Valley, it is perfectly obvious that the children's answers were programmed in advance.

Despite the fact that 80% of these children are really Orthodox, the children of martyred, holy Polish Jews; despite the fact that Agudath Israel in Poland represented the vast majority of Orthodox Jewry, these children were for the most part placed in nonreligious educational institutions, particularly in leftist kibbutzim. Agudath Israel received a ridiculously small number of children.

At this time of great trouble for Jewry, we have begged until the last moment not to widen the abyss that separates us, not to undermine the different sections of the Palestinian Yishuv. All our attempts to reach understanding with the heads of the Jewish Agency were fruitless, and the responsibility rests with them.

The Mizrahi also helped greatly in the present oppression of the children. All our efforts to reach understanding with the Mizrahi were fruitless. All our proposals were pushed aside, and even the

proposal to set up a joint committee headed by Rabbi Herzog to determine the religiosity of the children was not accepted. Mizrahi *madrichim* participated in pitting the children in the camps against Agudath Israel. The Mizrahi openly did everything in its power to see to it that Agudah would receive the smallest possible number of children.

Orthodox Jewry, furious and bitter at the handing over of the Teheran orphans for spiritual sh'mad finds this to be a very serious and dangerous precedent in view of the fact that some thirty thousand children are still supposed to be coming to Palestine. This time Orthodox Jewry will rebel against this government of compulsion exercised against Jewish children, against the monopoly that the Jewish Agency has taken into its own hands over the souls of children rescued from the Nazi hell.

Orthodox Jewry is this time called upon to stand up and save itself and its children. This war over the education of Jewish children, which began fifty years ago, will now come to its fullest development. The Jewish Agency has forced us into this battle, and we accept the challenge. To be in exile under Jews has now become a reality in Palestine with all its shocking ramifications. So horrible an inquisition against the lives and souls of young, unfortunate orphans has never been heard of from the time the Jews became a people. It is a sad and unfortunate tragedy that children who would have been educated in the spirit of their parents as loyal Jews should be uprooted from their faith in the Holy Land and that this should take place under the aegis of the official institutions that claim to be the "Jewish" institutions of Palestine....

Hasn't the time come for the Yishuv to make a soul reckoning of its own? Can we not still turn back, at the last moment, to the origins and to the sources of Judaism? Agudath Israel has a difficult battle ahead of it -- to change the situation of a Holy Land that wishes to turn away from the Torah of the Jews and has done so to the degree where it has forcibly taken small children and compelled them to leave their faith. It is up to us to fight against this tragic reality and to determine the style of life to be lived in the Holy Land in accord with the Torah. Whoever is for G-d, join us!

In these difficult days for Jewry in which unity and peace are the call of the hour, the leaders of the Jewish Agency have dug a deep pit to separate loyal Jewry from secular Jewry.

Great bitterness and disillusionment were expressed at the National Convention of Agudah Youth which took place on the Intermediary Days of Passover, 1944. The conference, which was heavily attended, issued the following statement:

The crime the Jewish Agency perpetrated against the suffering Teheran children is enough to stir every heart, even in these dire days full of grief. The large majority of these children, which the Jewish Agency itself confirmed were of Orthodox parents, were spiritually annihilated. With deception and through coercion, the Jewish Agency tore away these children from their faith. From a total of seven hundred and fifty children, only thirty were permitted a religious education in yeshivos.

In this very hour that we are speaking to you, these children of the Holy Ones who sanctified the Almighty's Name are eating bread, and all nonkosher foods. They are being trained to despise all that is

holy to the Jewish people. The venom of atheism is being imposed on their young souls. A cynical hate is taught to them for which their parents sacrificed their lives.

What has happened to these Teheran children might just as well be the consequences, G-d forbid, of 30,000 more children, yet to come to these shores. Religious youth! **We Dare Not Remain Silent!** These children are our brothers and friends. Just as ourselves, they were born to religious parents; just as ourselves, they were reared in the path of the Torah. Behold what has befallen them today!

The parents were killed by the Nazis, and under the hands of the Zionists the souls of these orphans are being killed. The Nazis severed the parents from their children in this world and the Zionists want to separate them in this world and the world to come. It is without any doubt that the parents would rather have the death of their children than for them to have a life void of Torah and fear of the Al-mighty.

Our hands did not shed this blood! We have done our share. We have used every means within our power to save these children. The absorption camps we set up stands vacant today. We will never forget, nor will we forgive the Jewish Agency for this.

To the leaders of the Agudath Israel and especially to the leaders of the Poali Agudath Israel, we say: Rend yourselves from this evil assemblage. Sever all bonds with them, Desist from all negotiations with them. Deny any gains to be obtained from them. Carefully guard the autonomy of the Orthodox Jewry who fear the L-rd. Put an end to all illusion. The Zionists are the most dangerous enemies of the Jewish

people. With them no compromises are possible. Orthodox Jewry must fight them until they are destroyed.

Teachers of our youth! Unmask before your students the evil of the Zionists! Place in their hearts the clear understanding that our struggle against Zionism and all its offshoots is a continuation of the historical battle of the Prophet-Elijah and the false prophets of the Ba'al, the battles of the Maccabees and the Hellenists, the battles of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Teach your pupils the chapter in the Code of Laws in the name of Rabbi Nosen, "Love all and hate the atheist," and the ones that turn the people away from the Al-mighty and His Torah. And King David says as well in Psalms, "Your enemies Al-mighty, I hate, and with those that would stand up against Thee do I quarrel."

We have lost the war for the Teheran children. Let us prepare ourselves for the battle for the children of the Holy Land. Let us save them all for Torah and for mitzvos. Let us unify our own ranks, and let us strengthen our organization. Let our one hand do our work, and with the other hand hold the weapon. Whoever is for G-d and Torah, join us. In the merit of the innocent children, whom we shall educate for Torah and for mitzvos, may G-d speedily send His redemption for us.

Rabbi Herzog also expressed his stand vigorously. At K'far HaNoar HaDati, he met with the children and told them that they should not go to the kibbutzim of those who have left the Torah whom he called "the destroyers of the House of Israel." As a result, a proposal was made at the National Council to cancel the budget for the Chief Rabbinate. In HaYesod of April

18. Rabbi Herzog expressed the following opinion:

When I visited the transit camps, it became clear to me from my snatches of conversation with children of all kinds that 90% or more of them had religious parents. The vast majority of children told me that their fathers had attended synagogues, and that their mothers had lit Sabbath candles. Many of them even told me about the religious education they had received in Poland. How then is it possible to take these children, refugee orphans, and forcibly remove them from the faith of their parents and to place them in absorption places and kibbutzim which publicly have given a bill of divorce to the G-d of Jewry? Places where they do not teach the children even Sh'ma Yisrael, the very foundation of faith in one G-d, creator of Heaven and Earth. Never did such a thing take place among Jews, not even among the Reformers. Even they accepted some of the commandments of the Torah, at least the very foundation of them all -- they believed in G-d. And now, to our great sorrow, we are witnesses to this shocking tragedy of entire Jewish settlements not even having a sign of a synagogue or of a Torah scroll -- and worse. I, therefore, express my halachic opinion that it is forbidden to hand over Jewish children to be taken care of, educated, or in any way directed in settlements that have a negative attitude toward the faith of Jewry, toward G-d's Torah and toward His commandments. Moreover, even the parents who were secularists and assimilationists came to the synagogue at least on Yom Kippur, a sign that somewhere in their hearts there was a religious sensitivity. It is, therefore, forbidden to hand over even their children to such hands or to place them in a

a secular school. According to the law of the Torah, the Jewish courts are commanded to educate the children of even total secularists, if they have the opportunity, and to give them a traditional education. All of Rabbi Herzog's efforts to influence the Jewish Agency accomplished nothing. **HaTzofeh** of May 28 wrote:

For the past five weeks, the Chief Rabbi has not let up on the Jewish Agency in demanding mutual clarification to find a way to solve the problems. He has written four or five letters to which no attention was paid. He has not even received the courtesy of any kind of reply.

Davar of July 25 wrote:

HaPardes, a rabbinical monthly published in Chicago, contains an article in its May issue which we quote: "On the Intermediate Days of Passover, Rabbi Meir Berlin, presently in New York, received a telegram from Chief Rabbi Herzog. In the telegram, Rabbi Herzog complained bitterly against the Jewish Agency in Palestine for handing over refugee children to places where they were compelled to violate the Jewish faith. Rabbi Herzog writes in his telegram: 'I am fighting a war against the Jewish Agency and request that the Agudas HoRabonim and Orthodox Jewry in America gird their remaining strength and come to our aid in this sacred war. Protest vociferously against this oppression. Save these children, the brands plucked from the fire of Europe; save them from spiritual destruction, and have them educated in the spirit of Torah and Jewry in accord with the wishes of their martyred parents.'" In regard to the entire issue, the article concludes: "Rabbis and Jews of America, stand up like one man. Cast off

from yourselves the yoke of this secular Jewish Agency. Let them know that they are not the leaders of the Holy Land."

Rabbi Herzog's firm stand aroused the anger of the Jewish Agency. Rabbi Fishman, the Mizrahi representative in the Agency Executive, was given the task of stirring up Palestine against Rabbi Herzog and publicly shaming him. But the rabbinical public supported Rabbi Herzog and encouraged his stand. Respected people, who stand above parties, organized a special group called The Committee to Protect the Honor of the Torah, which did everything it could to protect the Rabbi's honor, in addition to siding with him.

On May 23, representatives of Agudath Israel from all over the country met in Tel Aviv. This meeting was dedicated to the ongoing holocaust in Europe and to the Teheran affair. This was a meeting in which all factions of Agudath Israel participated and issued the following resolution:

The meeting expresses its shock at the fate of thousands of children, refugees from Poland who recently came to the Holy Land and are known as the Teheran children. It protests as vigorously as possible all the actions taken on the part of the Jewish Agency to cause the majority of these children, the children of Jews martyred in sanctification of G-d, to leave their faith and to give them an education of atheism and heresy.

The meeting protests the open robbery perpetrated against Agudath Israel education. Despite the fact that most of the children's parents were members of Agudath Israel, the Jewish Agency gave to Agudath Israel only about 3% of the children.

The Agudath Israel representatives went on in the resolution to criticize the divisiveness caused by the Jewish Agency and

called for unity among the Jewish people.

HaMashkif of May 26 stated in an editorial titled, "The Regime is Responsible":

The great Russian revolutionary and idealist, Herzen, once traveled through the most distant regions of Russia in the days of Czar Nikolai I. On his way, he met Jewish children who had been robbed from their parents' arms at a very tender age and had been sent to the villages of Central Russia to be prepared for military service. The true intent however, as everyone knew, was to baptize them and turn them into Christians. When Herzen saw these unfortunate children, dragging their feet along the snow-covered Russian Steppes in the harsh Russian winter, he said, "Cursed be the regime of Nikolai I forever." We, too, whose children have been robbed from the Jewish people -- this time not by strangers, but by members of that people itself in order to increase the split in the nation -- at this calamitous hour, we can only repeat the words of the great Russian idealist, "Cursed be the regime in which such deeds are possible."

The Reaction Abroad

The first news of what was happening to the Teheran children aroused great emotion in the diaspora. The Nazis had destroyed the centers of Jewry throughout the diaspora, with the exception of the United States and England in which large Orthodox populations still existed and which had the power to express their opinions publicly. In those two lands, responsible institutions responded vigorously to the shameful behavior of the Jewish Agency toward the children.

Berel Locker, representative of the political bureau of the Jewish Agency in England was compelled under the pressure of

public opinion in England, to cable the Jewish Agency in Palestine:

"In view of Rabbi Herzog's concern and the bitterness here, we seriously request that you undertake every conceivable effort to reach an amicable settlement with Chief Rabbi Herzog.

"B. Locker"

Rabbi Herzog received the following telegrams from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada and from the Rabbi of Lubavitch:

"We have received protests from the greatest spiritual leaders from among the recent refugees, the Rebbe of Ger and others in Palestine, about refugee orphans, 80% of whom are Orthodox, who have been sent to nonreligious camps. Please make every effort that these children be distributed to religious homes, Mizrahi and Agudah, without distinction. Kindly cable results.

"Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada"

"In my name and in the name of the World Union of Chabad Chassidim, I would respectfully demand from you and the Chief Rabbinate to take the necessary steps, as vigorously as possible, to ensure that the refugee children of the martyrs be provided for immediately in religious educational institutions and homes, according to the demand of the Torah authorities.

"Rabbi Joseph Schneerson"

The Rabbi of Lubavitch sent a long telegram addressed to the public in the Holy Land in general:

"Brooklyn, New York

"4 Nisan 5703

"To Rabbi Shlomo L. Eliezorov of Jerusalem:

"I ask you to publicize in my name in all Jewish newspapers the following proclamation addressed to Kolel Chabad and to the other Kolelim, to the Chabad Union, to the yeshivos Toras Emes, Tzemach Zedek, Achei T'mimim, and all the other yeshivos and Talmudei Torah in the Holy Land, to all the communities and to all the rabbis, to all the institutions, to all the orphanages, and to the populace in general:

"The refugee children who were saved and brought to the Holy Land, by G-d's grace, are the orphan children of our tortured martyrs murdered in the most brutal way, and their holy souls demand that their children be placed in truly Orthodox educational institutions. This is the only act left for us to perform for these people.

"You and we must effect this important action, so as not to be cursed most furiously by the parents of these children. I request and demand of you, in view of the terrible responsibility involved, that you protest as vigorously as possible, to be sure that these children are immediately placed in loyal Orthodox institutions in accord with the demand of the Torah leaders. There is no one who has the power or the authority to ignore the righteous demands of these martyrs that their children receive a truly religious education.

"Out of love for our fellow-Jews, I warn every single one of you to beware of the fury and the penalty if we do not participate and fulfill their demands.

"Jews, men of all parties in contemporary life,

fulfill your sacred obligation to our suffering children and to their martyred parents.

"If you do this, you will earn G-d's mercy for the Jewish people.

"I request that my telegram be given to Chief Rabbi Herzog and to the Jewish Agency and that it be publicized: I wish all a speedy redemption.

"Joseph Isaac Schneerson"

A second telegram from the Rabbi of Lubavitch:

"To Rabbi Shlomo L. Eliezerov, Jerusalem:

"Please tell Rabbi Alter of Ger, Rabbis Soloveitchik, Meltzer, Sofer, Sorotzkin, Kahaneman and Karelitz in my name and in the name of the rabbis of the Chabad Union, to comprise a Supreme Court as representatives of the souls of the married, and to take the institutions and the individuals to a Torah court in order to guarantee that the refugee children be handed over to religious institutions.

"I have written a circular to all the rabbis in the United States to join in demanding that these people come to a Torah court, a supreme court comprised of the above rabbis.

"The Rabbi of Ger and the other rabbis should cable the Union of Orthodox Rabbis in the United States and the **Morning-Journal** (a newspaper) in New York that the supreme court has been formed in order to take the responsible parties before a Torah court to arrange religious education for the refugee children.

"Every rabbi is asked to participate by signing."

HaMashkif of June 6 published the following:

On Friday the telegram sent by the Rabbi of

Lubavitch to Rabbi Herzog about the Teheran children was publicized in the synagogues of Petach Tikva. It reads:

"On the initiative of myself and 279 other rabbis whose names I sent to you by mail, we beg of you to continue the protest against the Jewish Agency to win success without any compromise at all. The Jews of America and of Canada are greatly embittered against the Jewish Agency and proposals are being considered to stop the financial aid to the Jewish Agency and its institutions until our demands are accepted in full."

In a telegram sent by Agudath Israel in London to the World Executive on April 16th 1943, we read:

"On Thursday, a conference of rabbis headed by Rabbis Abramsky, Unterman and Schonfeld will be convened on the subject of the Teheran children. Cable additional information. The Chief Rabbi is also intervening."

This major conference of all the rabbis of England did take place. The United Kingdom had for years not had so important a meeting of rabbis on a nonpolitical basis. Rabbis of all parties participated. Not only did this convention send out vigorous protests and requests, but decided to set a time limit, after which all-aid to Zionist funds would be stopped. It is typical that Rabbi Brownroth, who had been chosen to be Chief Justice of Tel Aviv and was a longtime member of Mizrachi, also signed the cable to the Jewish Agency:

"London, April 16, 1943

"A conference of the rabbis of London and outlying cities, with the participation of the judges of the religious court of London, demands that the education of the one thousand children who came

from Teheran and all the other immigrant children who will come to the Holy Land be determined by a representative commission of the rabbis of the Holy Land, headed by Chief Rabbi Herzog; that no activity concerning these children be undertaken without prior consultation with and approval of this Rabbinic Commission. We will await your consent to this up to the 30th of April. Otherwise, we shall absolutely be compelled to stop all aid for Youth Aliyah and for the Jewish National Fund in the communities that we represent and to publicize this among Anglo-Jewry in accordance with the words of the prophet "On behalf of Jerusalem, we shall not be quiet." We shall not allow Jewish generations coming to the Holy Land to be educated without religion, without Torah.

"Rabbinical Court of London: Judges Abramsky, Lazarus and Grunfeld.

Rabbis of London: the Rebbes of Stanislav, Shalovna, Cherchanova, Shutz, Shassov, Kielc. Rabbis Abramson, Baumgarten, Ben-Ami, Maneson, Brownroth, Baruch, Chentov, Zvi Farber, Gottlieb, Greenspan, Margolis, Gorokowsky, Gurewitz, Halper, Heshel, Honig, Knoblowitz, Mannes, Munk, Piekarsky, Rabinov, Rubin, Rudnik, Rabbi Dr. Schoenfeld, Semiatick, Singer, Shapiro, Hariss, Swift, Septman, Twersky, Weinstein, Wolf, Rosh Yeshiva Lopian.

The Rabbis of the rest of the United Kingdom: Rogoznitzky, Cardiff; Shakovitsky, Gateshead; The Rabbinical Court of Glasgow; Rabbi Atlas and his Court; Rabbi Horowitz, Leeds; Rabbi Unterman, Rosh Yeshiva Krasner, Liverpool; Rabbi Altman, Rabbi Feldman, Rabbi Ochs, Rabbi Rivkin, Rabbi

Kopel, Manchester; Rabbi Rosen, Rosh Yeshiva Segal, Manchester; Rabbi Rabinowitz, Sunderland; Rabbi Kauler, Birmingham; Rabbis Klein, Reich, Cambridge; Rabbi Cohen, Durking; Rabbi Babad, Adura; Rabbi Rubinstein, Glasgow; Rabbi Shepson, Grimsby; Rabbi Dunner, Leicester; Rabbi Horowitz, Letchworth; Rabbi Glass, Maidenhead; Rabbi Rogosnitsky, Newcastle; Rabbi Bamberger, Nottingham; Rabbi Cohen, Northampton; Rabbi Fish, Sheffield; Rabbi Fisher, Spofford; Rabbi Jakobovitz, Winersod."

A cable from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency News Bureau dated 19 April in London:

"At a session of the Board of Deputies, several angry questions were raised. The questioners wanted an explanation for the decisions of the conclave of British rabbis issued yesterday demanding that the Teheran children and all other children brought to the Holy Land receive a religious education. Dr. Feldman replied in the name of the Palestinian Committee that they are awaiting the results of consultations in Palestine on this matter."

A cable dated April 23 from the Agudath Israel of London to Jerusalem reads as follows:

"The entire public has risen up in arms against the actions of the Jewish Agency concerning the Teheran children. The **Chronicle**, the **Jewish Standard** and the **Jewish Weekly** all came out with editorials strongly attacking this behavior. Herzog cabled Hertz, deploring the actions of the Agency as leading toward the danger of an irremediable split in the Jewish public. Hertz and Abramsky yesterday called (Berel) Locker, and stood firm for religious education."

A cable dated April 29 from Agudath Israel in London to Jerusalem reads:

"An additional meeting of the rabbis was called for Tuesday. The Jewish Agency has not replied. Please cable the London Jewish Court, your approval of the rabbis' proposals. Cable us the latest news." The second session of the British rabbis publicized the following telegram on May 5:

"A conference of all rabbis, representing all parties, met yesterday and has given over to the Rabbinical Court to publicize after May 18 the following resolution signed by all the rabbis:

"If the religious education of the refugee children has not been guaranteed in a manner that will satisfy the Chief Rabbinate of the Holy Land, this conference of rabbis is compelled against its will to notify the Jewish public in England to cease its support of the Jewish National Fund and the Youth Aliyah Organization until it receives an assurance from Chief Rabbi Herzog that the religious education for the refugee children has been arranged in a satisfactory manner."

"Judges Abramsky, Lazarus, Grunfeld of London Jewish Court."

The Religious Youth Movement in England convened a special session concerning the children and issued the following telegram which was received by the Agudah World Executive:

"We demand that the education of all the refugee children who have arrived or will yet arrive in the Holy Land be directed and ratified by a representative commission of Palestinian rabbis, headed by Chief Rabbi Herzog, and that no steps be taken concerning

these children without prior consultation with and approval of that Rabbinical commission.

"Agudah, Beth Jacob, Zeirei Agudah Israel"

All these demands were aimed not only at the Jewish Agency, but also at the Mizrahi, which had refused to submit the issue of the children to the authority of the rabbis. Even the Mizrahi youth organizations in the diaspora rebelled against this position.

In a later telegram received by the Jewish Agency, Professor Zelig Brodetzky of London, head of the political department of the Jewish Agency and Chairman of the Board of Deputies, warned them of the danger facing the entire Zionist Federation if the Jewish Agency should continue its obstinacy and not reach an agreement with Orthodox Jewry. How real this danger was is attested to by the following statement, publicized in the newspapers of Palestine on May 11:

The institutions in Jerusalem have received a telegram from members of the Zionist Executive of America, demanding that the Teheran children be given a religious education.

In a telegram dated May 25 we read:

"London, 25 May

"A conference of the Rabbis of Great Britain decided yesterday to request all communities and all synagogues to stop supporting the Jewish National Fund appeals currently taking place in Great Britain. The reason for this is the settling of the Teheran children in nonreligious environments."

HaYesod of May 21 reported:

...Berel Locker requested that peace be made and a peaceful solution be found, otherwise difficulties will be created which will cause clearly predictable losses.

Also, Lady Eva V. Reading, Marchioness of Reading, (advisor to His Majesty's government to Ministry of Health on child care during World War II) emphasized that as a result of the decision of the British rabbis, the Funds will suffer. These telegrams (from Zionist leaders in the U.S. and Great Britain) greatly influenced the Zionist Executive and there seems to be a tendency to terminate this painful affair, and to reach agreement with Agudath Israël on this subject.

The fury of diaspora Jerry, expressed in a wave of telegrams and the decision to boycott the Zionist Funds, was reported by a member of the Jewish Agency Executive and head of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department, Mr. Eliyahu Dobkin, at a press conference which took place on May 26th. According to Davar of May 27, Dobkin said:

In recent weeks, a flood of telegrams from different countries, from Rabbinic organizations and communities, have arrived here, containing questions about the Teheran children.

The fear of financial loss caused the heads of the Agency to pay attention to this demonstration of public opinion and to take several steps which HaBoker of June 3, in an article by Mr. Y-n. labels: "Sneaky Concessions". Some of the 'concessions' were the following: in the transit camps (not eliminating them entirely), appointing a religious supervisor (one additional Mizrahi official in the Youth Aliyah office) and eliminating the trips (not, however, propaganda and other means of influence). These were the promises given concerning children who would come to Palestine in the future, and they satisfied the Mizrahi and its representative, Rabbi Fishman. It is noteworthy that no assurance was given that they would stop polling the children as to where they would like to be educated; there was no assurance

that they would stop sending little children against their will, along with their older siblings to atheistic educational institutions. Nor was there any promise that they would correct any of the evils done in the distribution of the children already in the land. Were it not for the sharp reaction and primarily the fear of boycott of the Zionist Funds, the Jewish Agency would not even have agreed to these "concessions". Mr. P. B. writes about this in HaBoker of June 1:

First of all, it is again clear that it is impossible to move the Jewish Agency Executive to concern itself with the opinion of anyone except the leadership of the Histadrut, unless one boycotts the Zionist Funds. In this sense, we have been taught a very harsh and dangerous lesson. But the lesson is, to our sorrow, a very clear one.

Whatever has been written about the Teheran children and the scandal of party hacks descending like vultures on these refugee children -- about soul-snatching, about publicity visits in agricultural settlements, about ignoring the existence of an educational department in the National Council, about the one-sided composition of the commission "investigating" Youth Aliyah -- none of these was able to disturb the monumental calm of the Jewish Agency Executive. It is possible to say that what is done is done and cannot be undone. Yet only after the National Funds were boycotted abroad, and there was a threat to the income of the Jewish Agency -- the income that gives it its power -- only then did it begin to show some signs of concern.

We must admit that the Jewish Agency Executive is challenging all those who have so far refused to boycott the Funds because only the threat of striking

at the source of their income is likely to get the Executive to stop ignoring the opinion of every faction that is not in power.



Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn

CHAPTER IX SUMMARY

It is possible that someone will ask what all this tumult is about. Why did world Jewry get so excited? At a time of such great suffering, when hundreds of thousands of Jewish children are being killed in the most brutal fashion, is this the time to stir up heaven and earth because of several hundred children who are given a nonreligious education? Whoever asks this question demonstrates a lack of understanding as to the meaning of this problem, both in its spiritual context and in its historical framework.

What is the spiritual significance of this issue? These nearly one thousand children who, with G-d's help, were saved from the cruel fate they might have shared with their siblings and parents are really symbolic of the entire House of Jewry. Every one of them represents a thousand of his little brothers and sisters who were butchered, burned, had their heads smashed against walls, or died of starvation and plague. If every Jewish soul is the equivalent of an entire world, then these children who survived the holocaust -- everyone of them is the symbol of a thousand worlds. For concentrated in and represented by them are not only the hopes of their parents, but the hopes of all Polish Jewry that had been faithful and loyal to G-d and His Torah. As frightening and as shocking as this idea may be, we shall state it: These children are a living monument to Polish Jewry which is now paralyzed and dying. They cannot be measured by any normal yardstick. Quantity, in this case, is not a determining factor.

There is one more factor in regard to which quantity is irrelevant: The parents of the children. Jewish parents see their children as the goal of their lives. Jewish parents who observe the Torah see as their supreme goal the raising of children to serve G-d. Mothers, upon lighting the Sabbath candles, pray

that "the eyes of my children should be illuminated by the Torah." Fathers bless their children before Kol Nidrey, "May the Fear of G-d be upon your face all the days of your life so that you should not sin." He who removes the heart of these children from the tradition of their parents destroys the single hope of the parents' lives.

Those children who fear the pain and the anguish they would cause their parents if they should go to communities or to the homes of Torah-forsakers are assured by the **madrichim** that their parents are no longer alive and they are consequently not concerned with what the children do. We, however, who believe in the eternity of the human soul, believe that death does not sever the ties between the parents and their orphans. The parents, whose sole aspiration was to raise their children to be occupied with the fulfillment of the Torah and G-d's commandments, have been disappointed. They lie in anguish in their graves. Can one imagine the suffering if fathers or mothers who remained alive should come to the Holy Land and meet their son or daughter and find them spiritual strangers, desecrators of all they hold holy, scoffers at G-d's Torah? Should they arrive, finally, in the land of their hopes, after all the terrible suffering they may have undergone, here they would come to the most horrifying disillusionment of all — the loss of their children, even if they are alive and well.

Whom would they blame for their disillusionment, for their sorrow, if not the Yishuv, into whose hands they handed over the fate of their children? The responsibility would lie especially with the religious public and the rabbis of the Holy Land. This book clarifies the situation; it proves who took care of this treasure and who did not, who made every effort to educate these children in the spirit of their parents and who caused these efforts to fail.

In the history of the Jewish people, so accustomed to

suffering, there is one chapter that shocks every person who reads about it. This is the chapter of the Cantonists. One feels horror at the suffering that innocent Jewish children had to endure when they were robbed from the arms of their parents and taken away to be converted to Christianity, and shame that there were Jewish hands that aided the carrying out of this terrible crime — the hands of the "choppers" (grabbers). The name "Teheran children" will also become a concept that arouses horror and shame when one studies the archives of Jewish history. The crime against the Teheran children was not carried out by ordinary people whose flaw was that they simply loved money, as did the "choppers" in those days. This crime is on record as being the crime of the people who stood at the helm of the Yishuv in Palestine, and the crime of their representatives in Teheran and in Palestine. Mrs. Szold's words at the 19th Zionist Congress in Lucerne, Switzerland (**Youth Aliyah Book**, page 458) sound like a tragic joke now:

Before my departure from Palestine, I visited all the settlements where young people have settled so as to refresh my impressions. I thought then of all those children whom we lost throughout the generations. I thought about the children who were sent to St. Thomas Island, and about the Cantonists in Russia, and others. I thought about our sin too, in not having created the means required to solve the problem of our children in Palestine, the most important question after the question of **alyah**. But when I saw the youngsters, I thought to myself, "We are atoning for the sins that others have committed." And again I said to myself, "This is Zionism in its fulfillment. How good it would be if we could expand our efforts, if we could bring children to this land, who are below the age of 15, and not merely for two or four years.

What profit there would be in this! How greatly we would be praised by the next generation. This would indeed be a fulfillment of the prophetic vision: The return of the parents to the children and the children to the parents."

Yes indeed, "This is Zionism in it's fulfillment." The affair of the Teheran children evinced the **Kultur-Kampf** taking place between the two segments of the nation: the part loyal to the Torah and the part that denies it. This war began with the Haskala (enlightenment) movement of Berlin, and will ultimately be decided here on holy soil. Let us not close our eyes to the fact that the hopes of Orthodox Jewry have taken a turn for the worse. The European holocaust has destroyed all the centers of Torah Judaism. We, today, standing in the front of this battle, have certainly found ourselves without a rear guard, without the great reserve forces **always so vibrant with life and energy**. Our task has become much more responsible and much more difficult. The battle for the souls of the Teheran children was a battle to determine the form which the official education of the Jewish people would take. It was a battle to determine the form of the Jewish people as a whole. This battle between a "A kingdom of priests and a sacred nation", on the one hand, and "The house of Jewry like all the other nations", on the other hand, is the battle between Orthodox Judaism and Zionism.

Do not reduce the affair of the Teheran children to small change: It is not a question of the soul-snatching of hundreds of Jewish children. Do not falsely suspect the leftist kibbutz people of seeking to gain new bodies for their kibbutzim or of seeking the funds allotted for the children's maintenance. The left is battling for principles, and it is just such an evaluation of the situation which we must bring with us into battle -- a battle

which the Mizrahi press and its leaders sought to distort. Menachem Gerson, a writer who is a member of HaShomer HaTzair, wrote this very, very clearly in an article entitled "Our Right to Secular Education" (Davar of April 19, 1943):

The public at large is surprised and shocked at this scene. It senses that this is not the way for the Yishuv to greet children rescued from the holocaust. It turns its back on the political battle and judges all the parties worthy of punishment. Why should they make party and factional calculations that cause young and tender children to suffer? This supersensitive reaction is inaccurate. It makes no serious attempt to get to the roots of the matter and to take a clear stand in the great battle that is now taking place; it makes no attempt to clarify for itself what this battle is all about. True beyond a doubt, every Jew is concerned with the welfare of these children. However, this concern should not cause us to change our minds. Let us not ignore the fact that the content of this concern is very different. The goals that various circles establish for the education of these children are different. Consequently, the means of education that these groups choose will vary as well. A stance of general human bitterness which refuses to pay any attention the causes of the conflict that broke out does not lead to any progress. All it does is confound what is valuable and pay attention only to external factors. Two opposing sides maintain that all that is involved is a practical question. **Halton HaMauchad** asserts positively that the settlements operated by the Histadrut are only interested in gaining the £4 Palestinian that the Polish Government is allotting for each child. Well, let **Halton**

HaMeuchad enjoy its besmirching: "Evil sees as evil thinks". But within the camp there are those who ask, "What are you up in arms about? This is a practical issue of absorbing hundreds of children in different places. We got our share, and even if the religious get more than they deserve now, there will be plenty more refugee children coming into the country." This "practical" attitude makes no sense to us. It is our opinion that we are dealing here with a matter of principle of the highest order. Underlying the open debate on the subject of distributing the children and the right to absorb them is a subcutaneous debate which, with the passage of time, may turn into a bitter, penetrating one. The subject of this debate is the right to secular education in Palestine. No fervent rephrasing can cover up the topic. Religious circles see religious education as the sole legitimate educational form in the country. Their spokesmen have expressed this more than once. Their reasoning says, "Orphans, according to Jewish tradition, are the responsibility of the community to educate, and the community can only provide a religious education." The conclusion that this leads to regarding the position of secular education is obvious.

The acrid debate around the Teheran children is not merely a practical one nor is it a political debate in the limited sense of that expression. If we see things in their true perspective, this is the beginning of a confrontation which was preceded by revelations made in a variety of debates on the subject of the cultural status of the Jewish settlement in Palestine. Let the laboring public be aware of what the debate is

all about; let them not evade it! Let our national institutions establish absorption priorities while maintaining the secular character of Zionism!

Lest the reader think that this is the opinion of the extreme leftists, here is the publicized opinion of an official personality, Mr. Elyahu Dobkin, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive. At a press conference devoted to the subject of the Teheran children, Dobkin said (*Davar* of May 29):

Agudath Israel has a single "modest" demand:

All the hundreds of the Teheran children who have already arrived and all the tens of thousands of children whom we hope to bring to this country are to be given a religious education under the absolute authority of the Chief Rabbinate. True in the diaspora orphans were sent to Talmudey Torah, but in Palestine this custom never existed and will not come into being. No party, no educational system has yet agreed to a unified educational program under the supervision of Chief Rabbinate as demanded by Agudath Israel.

The problem has been clearly stated: "in the diaspora orphans were sent to Talmudey Torah, but in Palestine this custom will not come into being." This is the official position of the Jewish Agency: Palestine is the land of secular construction. Its government will be secular; its official educational system will be secular. For religious people there will be a spiritual ghetto in which they will be permitted to satisfy their special requirements. But the national educational system will be secular. In the Diaspora there may have been a place for religion as a shield against assimilation. But this is not the case in Palestine where a fully secular nationalistic life will be developed. This is the official policy followed by the heads of the Zionist settlement, its writers and its thinkers. Moshe

Kleinman, editor of the World Zionist Organization's official organ, **HaOlam**, wrote in an editorial dated June 7 about the Teheran children, and he concluded:

Fortifying traditional life, returning to and protecting the historical form of Judaism? Yes, and again, Yes! But rabbinical rule? We suspect that the answer must be a very vigorous No and No again.

Mr Simon published a major article in **Ha'Aretz** on July 5th and 6th titled "The Zionist Educational Program in the Light of the Issue of the Teheran Children." Throughout the entire polemic on the subject of the Teheran children, there seems to have been no article that penetrated the depths of this issue or gave such an incisive analysis as this one by Simon. Without identifying with his conclusions, one must admit that he succeeded in establishing an appropriate and serious approach to the affair of the Teheran children. Here are some excerpts from his article:

The fact as it stands, stands. This uniform lifestyle, in all its details, is the very thing that unified us into a single entity at a time when it was applicable to every single Jew. And it is this lifestyle that now divides the nation into two separate groups -- the group that maintains the religion and the group of those who are free agents. Different opinions do not show up immediately. It is possible to hide them for a long time, in order to live in peace. But in a lifestyle that is sanctified with reverence for the Torah and faith, any change stands out immediately and must lead to separation. Everything done in Palestine now will be done with the intention of determining the future of the country. There is no escape from this in a land under construction with constant immigration. The hunt for the children's souls, which is truly

despicable and which involves great pedagogical dangers both for the children being hunted and also for the young people doing the hunting, can be understood even though it cannot in any way be justified as deriving from the enthusiastic stand taken by people who have totalitarian opinions and believe that Palestine must either be built by their yardstick or entirely destroyed. This is the firm faith of all of our Orthodox, whether their faith is a purely religious one, a politically religious one, or purely political one. Let no student of the situation treat lightly the forces competing and battling here. The best of them are not concerned merely with building up a 'reserve force' for their party. Rather they are concerned with the future of the land as a whole, solely within the framework and the perspective of their faith, which they consider the only true one. There are no more bitter wars than those between different ideals.

Orthodox Jewry -- though I do not claim to be speaking in its name, I shall try to explain its problems of conscience -- regards the question in a new form: How will Jewry as a whole educate the children it has been entrusted with, in the spirit of the Torah of Jewry, or not in its spirit?

It is worthwhile to rephrase the question: In the Palestine now under construction, will there be one Jewish public, or will there be two Jewish publics -- one religious and one free-thinking?

This problem is not only a new one but an extremely serious one for devout Jewry. Our people has always distinguished between individual transgressors who do what they do in private, (following the dictum, 'If a man sees that his evil inclination is getting the better of him, let him go to a

place where he is not known, don black garments, and do as he pleases, and let the Divine Name not be desecrated in public' -- **Moed Katan** 17a) and the sacred task of Jewry as a whole. They always regard as more serious the offender who desecrated the Sabbath in public. In the modern diaspora, the 'sinners' found themselves somewhat justified since their large number somehow mitigated the signs of their transgressions so that they themselves could regard them as lesser sins. Here in Palestine they do not consider themselves sinners at all, but as fulfillers of the major commandments of their nation and of their land in our generation. They feel absolutely no qualms of conscience regarding their Judaism. On the contrary, they consider the Orthodox retarded for not having come to their senses yet and, at times, they even consider them sinners with regard to the 'commandments' of intellectual enlightenment and nationalistic progress.

Moreover, they did not cast off the yoke of the Torah and its commandments simply because they found it convenient to do so, but in order to accept upon themselves a new, difficult nationalist goal for which they frequently make sacrifices and act with such great enthusiasm that some consider their behavior, however erroneously, 'religious'. Consequently, they have created for themselves laws and commandments for which violators are prosecuted -- particularly work and production laws and "mitzvoth" of consumers and consumption. In other words, a complete public form of life. We do not have here a religious Jewish public form confronting licentiousness, but one public form versus a second public form. This is the real situation of

religion in the Holy Land that every Jew, religious or not religious, who lives and functions within it must be aware of and take into consideration.

This is the only way to evaluate the battle over the Teheran children. It is a battle for the public form of the Jewish people throughout the entire world and particularly in the Holy Land. We must remember that Palestine has now, with the destruction of Eastern Europe, been turned into the major Jewish spiritual center, whose influence will spread to the entire diaspora whether for good or, G-d forbid, for bad. True, we believe that the Holy Land will either be built by our yardstick -- the yardstick of Torah -- or, G-d forbid, will be destroyed entirely. There is, therefore, no room for compromise, for concessions, for ignoring issues, or for lightmindedness in this battle. We sought to postpone this confrontation. We regarded this time of crisis, which demands the focusing of all our energies on saving our brethren being led to the slaughter, as an inappropriate time for internal struggles. But our brothers, the forsakers of the Torah, have compelled us to wage battle with them, and we must take up the challenge, for it is a matter of life and death. The life of the Jewish people and the life of the Yishuv are at stake.

No one can say that we succeeded in this battle for the Teheran children. We lost it primarily because the undermining by the Mizrahi caused the Chief Rabbinate to yield to the Jewish Agency and also confused Jewish public opinion abroad. As a result of the affair of the Teheran children, Jewry abroad has had its eyes opened wide to see the tremendous spiritual abyss into which the Yishuv in the Holy Land is descending. The 'official Rabbinate' could not withstand the final test. It finally withdrew from its unbending position, and the Jewish Agency will long remember its surrender, so pregnant with danger for the future.

'From the bold has emerged the sweet.' The affair of the Teheran children has aroused the public from its sleep and from its apathy. A view of the affair of the Teheran children reflects the situation of all the children in Palestine who, for the most part, are given an education without knowledge of the Torah and without the observance of its commandments. The organizational weakness of the religious public, which for many years has allowed the leadership of the Yishuv to be in the hands of people who deny the Torah, is painfully evident. The Orthodox public must draw very plain conclusions. It must raise the issue of education to the top of its list of concern. It must pay full attention to dealing with youth in the land and to the youth coming in from abroad. **It must organize its ranks and establish a single front, a firm front of the Torah people. It cannot allow secularism to become the public form of life in the Holy Land. Secular education cannot become the official education of the Jewish people.** The Talmud Torahs, which provided the base for the Jewish people to stand firm against all the tribulations of the diaspora throughout two thousand years, will alone continue to serve in the Holy Land as well as the creative force for Jewish children and to raise them in sanctity and in purity. That the Torah is the sole measuring rod for validity of the values that it provides; education from teachers who in their own daily lives carry it out in practice; education for pure faith, for loyalty to the Jewish Sages, for the willing and joyous acceptance of G-d's kingship.

This type of education has withstood the test of time. It has raised Jews whom all the tribulations of the exile have not been able to take away from their faith, Jews who have been capable of rising to the highest level of human attainment -- the level of the sanctifiers of G-d's name. The chain of sanctifiers of G-d continues in this generation as well. Ninety-three women who were students and teachers of Beth Jacob sanctified G-d when

they died a death of purity. This number has become a symbol. Without comparing one kind of heroism with another, one sacrifice with another, let us not ignore those Teheran children who sanctified G-d in their lives. There were fourteen children who refused to eat nonkosher food in Teheran. They hungered, they were persecuted, and they suffered -- but they did not yield. They, too, are worthy of being a symbol. And another symbolic number: Thirty Teheran children who demanded unyieldingly that they be sent to Orthodox yeshivos. And forty others who left the rich and glorious absorption places that they were sent to and went to yeshivos. Let these matters not be undervalued by us. These children refused to be influenced by all the seductive talk, by all the threats with which their **madrichim** intimidated them. They did not allow the wealth and the great pleasure demonstrated during their journey through the kibbutzim to blind them. Even though they believed the fairy tales of the **madrichim** that hunger, poverty and a bleak future awaited them in the Orthodox absorption places, they clearmindedly chose the way of the Torah. They rejected all temporal benefits so as to merit eternal life, so as to sanctify G-d, rather than desecrate Him -- in public. Torah education, yielded these glorious fruits. It raised these sanctifiers of G-d in life and in death. No power can crush this education. The plots of all who schemed against it, outside Jewry and within it, will all be shattered on the rock of G-d's promise to the Jewish people, 'It will not be forgotten from the mouth of His seed.'

YEMENITE JEWRY'S HOLOCAUST

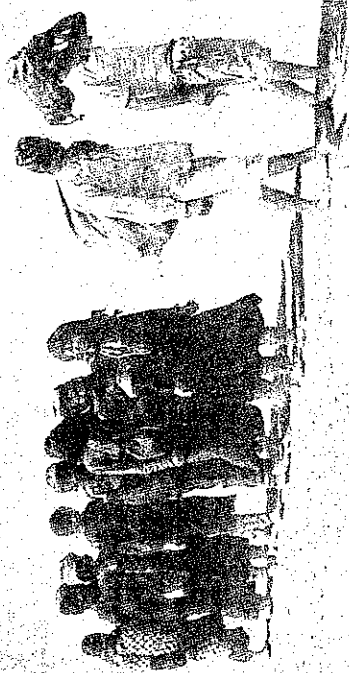
INTRODUCTION

Jews throughout the world were thrilled by the story of the "Greatest Homecoming in the World." This was the popular name given to the **aliyah** of thousands upon thousands of Jews to Israel shortly after its establishment. These were the lost brothers, dark-skinned from Arabic lands, olive-skinned from the countries rimming the Mediterranean, and the more familiar type from the European continent. These were the hunted, the near-to-despair, those with the terrible longing in their eyes. And now they were all coming home to their Holy Land -- renamed the State of Israel. Jews applauded, both in Israel which opened its borders wide, and in the USA which made this homecoming possible. But, in fact, this did not turn out to be the wonderful "homecoming" which the immigrants had expected.

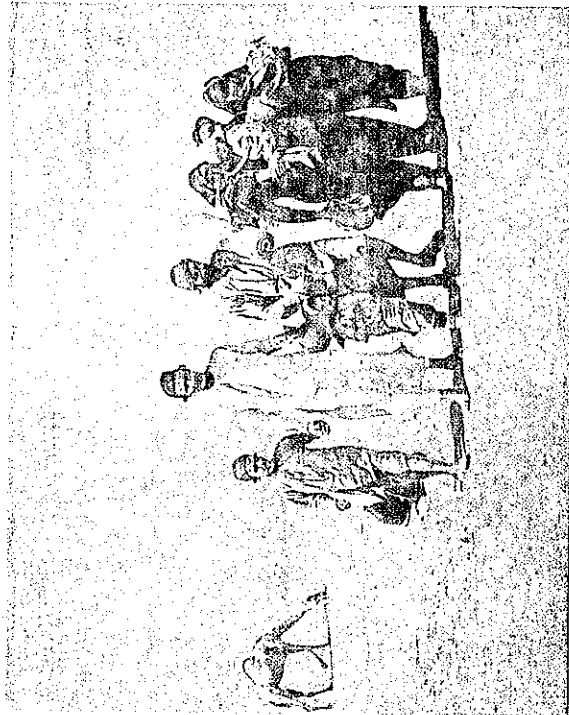
The mass **aliyah** (immigration to Israel) from 1949-1952 consisted mainly of Jews from Arabic countries, such as Yemen, Iraq and Morocco, most of whom were religious. About 15,000 children per year arrived alone, having been sent ahead by their parents. These children came under the supervision of the Youth Aliyah (Youth Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency, which is financed primarily by funds raised in America through United Jewish Appeal).

Preference for emigration was given to those children whose parents did not specifically request a "religious" education for them on their emigration declarations. Children whose parents had requested religious education, once they had been accepted for emigration, were required to stay in the transit camps in their home countries, as well as in Israel after their arrival, much longer than the other children, who were quickly placed in absorption camps. This was the first indication for the immigrants that something was amiss in the Holy Land.

Most of the immigrant children were placed in nonreligious



"Because of our sins we were brought to our land." A picture of Yemeni Jews walking in the desert on the way to Aden -- weeks sometimes months, many dying on the way.



or anti-religious institutions, mainly leftist kibbutzim, ostensibly because the Youth Aliyah budget provided only the cost of transportation and maintenance for these children, but not the cost of housing. Thus the children were handed over to institutions or parties which could provide housing.

The long stay in the transit camps demoralized the religious children and offered the Zionists the time and the opportunity to win them over to their ideology. After protests by religious elements, a commission was appointed by the Israeli Government to investigate conditions in the camps. This commission, after visiting all the camps and hearing the testimony of 181 witnesses, officially reported that:

1. Anti-religious prejudices and acts were openly initiated by camp officials and counselors.

2. "Soul-snatching" was not unusual.

3. **Peoth** (side-locks) of religious Yemeni children were cut off as a methodical practice, a clearly anti-religious act.

4. Some camps allowed a systematic abuse of religion. Religious children were weaned away from their religion, and their parents intimidated into accepting a non-religious education for their children.

5. Children in UJA-supported camps were told that in Israel "there is no Sabbath as in the Diaspora, there is no G-d, and all religious observances are rubbish."

6. The sudden imposition of other customs shook the "very foundations of morality" of the children.

The report was so shocking in its revelations that the leading Israeli independent newspaper, **Haaretz** (the Times of Israel), bitterly castigated those responsible for the camp infamies. In an editorial, the newspaper stated:

In numerous cases, verified beyond a shadow of doubt, pressure was brought to bear on immigrants not to send their children to religious educational

institutions. The workers of the Absorption Department of the Jewish Agency bear a large measure of guilt in this respect. Some of the camp directors outdid themselves in autocratic behavior. The wearing of **peoth** is a holy custom in Jewish communities, among them the Yemenite communities; it is universally observed. One rabbi heard Yemeni children add a prayer during the Grace after meals: "May the Merciful One take revenge for us; May the Merciful One punish Tzipporah!" Tzipporah was the counselor who had cut off their **peoth**. How must the parents feel if even the children react so strongly to this outrageous ill-treatment?

In this manner, a system was set up which succeeded in snatching souls from the faith of our fathers. This infamy grows even more painful when we recognize that it is mainly money raised by American Jewry which was and is still used for the perpetration and perpetuation of this unspeakable violation of all human decency.

Yet that is, by far, not the end of the story.

Aside from the loss Jewry suffers by the defection of these staunchly religious youths, there is the question of basic human rights and religious freedom. Religious or nonreligious, Jew or non-Jew, all who believe in the freedom of democratic living are aghast at what was perpetrated in the transit camps in Israel against a youth whose innocence was a poetic joy to behold.

Nonreligious and anti-religious elements in Israel often emphasize that "even in the United States of America there exists the separation of church and state." This is a misleading argument when used in connection with the unfortunate situation of the religious children immigrating to Israel. For the problem is neither one of the relation between state and religion, nor of the overall system of education in Israel. It is simply that of preventing the religious children of religious parents from

being forced to enter nonreligious or anti-religious institutions and settlements.

Separation of church and state is understood in the United States of America as something entirely different. A famous Supreme Court decision reads: The principle of the separation of church and state "never meant freedom from religion, but rather freedom of religion." This decision was hailed by a spokesman of a committee representing Jews, Protestants and Roman Catholics as an

outstanding victory in the struggle of free men and women throughout the world to preserve the freedom of religion and the freedom of parents to protect their children from being converted into creatures of an all-powerful secular state imposing thought-control by shaping the policies and content of compulsory education.

The attempt of nonreligious and anti-religious elements in Israel to becloud the issue of the immigrant children by falsifying the concept of separation of church and state became even more vicious. There was a powerful, well-sustained campaign to make the struggle for the religious education of these children appear as part of a scheme to transform the State of Israel into a "theocracy." The statements of Israeli religious leaders denying these allegations were ignored. The Zionists found in the word "theocracy" a powerful slogan for their accusation that the religious elements wanted to force their way of life and their religious convictions upon the citizenry of Israel. The propaganda machines of the Zionists ground out press release after press release, not only in Israel but also in the United States, not only in the Jewish but also in the English press, to evoke the impression that they, the Zionists, were fighting for the freedom of **their** consciences!

1. The New York Times, June 21, 1950.

The civilized world is agreed on the right of parents to seek the continuity of their religious conviction. But the Zionists in Israel used political trickery and brazen economic pressure to rob innocent children of their right to their heritage. Is that freedom or democracy? If one fights for the basic right of religious education for those whose parents desire it, is he making a reactionary attempt to impose "theocracy" upon the State of Israel?

The answer is simple. Never before in the history of the Jewish people have such crimes against Jewish freedom of conscience and against all human rights been committed by Jews. Never before in Jewish history has such brutal injustice been perpetrated under the guise of freedom and democracy.



A group of Yemenite Jewish boys and girls. It is not known when or where the picture was taken. Notice, even the little girls had their heads covered, as was the custom of Yemenite Jews.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND: LIFE IN YEMEN

Status of Jews in the Middle Ages

Only by becoming familiar with the life of Jews in Yemen can we fully understand the tragedy of what happened to them upon their arrival in the Holy Land. In the Middle Ages, their fate was no worse, and was often better than that of some Jewish communities in Europe exposed to the Inquisition and other terrors. For in Yemen, once they paid the jizyah and other taxes, the Jews were free to live, work and worship. They had their separate villages, their fields, plantations and groves, and in the towns they could pursue their skills in the arts and crafts. In some regions, in return for more special taxes, the local Arab sheikh or noblemen often extended real protection of life and property to "his" Jews against other Arabs. Hayim Habashush relates several such instances of protectors in rural areas going out of their way in the pursuit of justice for their Jews, a pursuit often leading to long feuds and bloody tribal warfare, as is the custom of the desert. Some tribes treated their Jews better and some worse; but generally the provincial potentate was concerned that his Jews should feel safe and move freely in the villages and markets, for this was an indication of the might of the lord shielding them. Moslem belief had something to do with it, too, for Moslems believe that a Jew whose blood has been left to cry for revenge will ride upon his murderer on the Day of Resurrection. One Moslem can forgive another, but for the life of a defenseless Jew, Allah Himself exacts revenge.

Yemenite Jews had full autonomy in communal affairs: they were allowed to preserve their books, synagogues, schools and cemeteries, and, consequently, their way of life.

This is to say that while they lived in bondage, they had some advantage from their condition. And, considering the harshness of medieval times, especially in Arabia, one might almost say it was a tolerable condition. But in Yemen, the Middle Ages never came to an end. No moral or technical advance of civilization ever penetrated to its remote highlands. Its mules, camels and primitive wooden ploughs never gave way to the motor car or tractor -- and, in the same way, the status of the Jews never changed from the days of Mohammed to the present.

Spiritual and Cultural Heritage

The Synagogue and the Study of Torah

Although Joseph B. Schechtman states in *On Wings of Eagles* that "the ghetto was the determining feature of the Jewish existence in Yemen,"¹¹ it was not the same kind of ghetto that we think of today. Those who visited the ghetto of San'a were pleasantly surprised by the "cleanliness and loveliness of the Jewish homes." Also noted is Amin Rihani's impression:

My idea of the ghetto, as it exists on the East Side of Manhattan, or even in the Bronx was totally but happily upset. I looked for clotheslines, for rags, for overflowing garbage cans, for accumulated filth, for babble and confusion, ragamuffin children, for slatterns with infants at their breasts, for dingy and smelly doorways; but I found instead a labyrinth of

incredibly clean lanes, narrowing in places into footpaths, with little doors on either side, far apart, a few people going sluggishly and quietly hither and thither, a woman's face in a window, a flower pot, a sweet-basil plant. No cries, no noise, no confusion, no smells.... The little terraces are whitewashed and hedged with flower pots; in the principal street, a broad thoroughfare leading to the outer gate, the children play; and neither the dense crowd nor the unctuous raggedness of the slums is evident except in its business section.²

This assessment of the Jewish quarter in San'a was shared by other travelers there, such as Hans Helfritz,³ who found the interior of the houses to be "scrupulously clean," Ladislav Farago and Hugh Scott.

The Jews were allowed complete freedom of worship in San'a and Amin Rihani saw sixteen synagogues there. Hans Helfritz, who visited the city in 1931, stated in *L'Arabie Heureuse* that with a population of 50,000 San'a had forty-eight mosques and thirty-nine synagogues. A Syrian, Nazih al-'Azam, who visited San'a in 1936 found sixteen Jewish schools (*yeshivos*).⁴

Hugh Scott's comments on the Jewish quarter of San'a-- Qu'al Yahud -- which he visited in 1937, illustrate the life of Yemeni Jews near the time of their *aliyah*, which was much the same as it had been in the Middle Ages.

1. Joseph B. Schechman, *On Wings of Eagles* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1961), p. 44.
2. Amin Rihani's, *Around the Coasts of Arabia and Arabian Peak and Desert*, London, 1930.

3. Hans Helfritz, *L'Arabie Heureuse* (Paris: Albin Michael, 19612).
4. Nazim Al-'Azam Rihla (Cairo, 1938).

In *the High Yemen* (London, 1942), pp. 134-137.

The Jews have complete freedom of worship within their own quarter, but no large or imposing building, which would vie with the mosques, may be built. Hence there are many small synagogues, little one-storeyed buildings distinguished by their uniform coat of whitewash. Much of the Jews' life, it seems, centers round the synagogue, which they call *kniss* (Hebrew: *knesses*). With the first light of day, little boys, beginning at the age of three, trundle off to the synagogue where they remain till night-fall, learning to read and write and chant the Bible.

The synagogue to which we were taken had a door leading into a forecourt, open to the sky and divided by a transverse wall with an arch. The inner part of this court had little lockers in its wall, for the shoes of worshippers. The synagogue itself was a single-roomed edifice, small but fairly lofty, very plain within and without. All round it, against the walls, were small mats and low wooden desks for adult worshippers. Very narrow plaster shelves projected from the walls, high above the floor. On these (we were told) boys sit through the services, with legs dangling.

The caretaker of the synagogue opened one of two large cupboards, disclosing several upright objects two and a half to three feet high, covered in bright silken wrappings. One of these cases containing the scrolls of the scriptures, which they took down and unwrapped, was a long box, polygonal in section and covered in bright red. Opened lengthwise, it revealed



Men learning in a synagogue in San'a.

a great parchment scroll with a rod at either end, the ornate silver tops of the rods projecting beyond the box. This roll, which (they said) contained all the books of "Meysa" (Moses), was beautifully written in Hebrew manuscript. Many of the copies of the scriptures in San'a are very old.

Shlomo Barer writes in his book *The Magic Carpet* his impression about the Jews and their books while in Aden.

What books do they have apart from the Bible? The Mishnah, I was informed, and the Gemara. These are the treatises of the Talmud, the body of Jewish law and legend codified in ancient times in Jerusalem and in Babylon. Pious Jews in Eastern Europe used to study these heavy tomes in which, in Aramaic, hairs are split on every conceivable question. Now I

learned that in Yemen, too, they sit over these books - sit over them all night. "We gather after midnight in groups of five, ten or fifteen men, and go to the kniss for study."

...from a dark corner of the tent, a man drags over a crate full of books, prayer books, Talmudical books, hymn books and books of cabbalist, mystic philosophy -- some of them worn and tattered and bearing the impress of printers in Wilna and Vienna 100 years ago, others beautiful hand-written copies made in Yemen itself, each a work of art with its thousands of words and letters separately drawn in square print, like the manuscripts once copied by Latin scholars in monasteries, except that these are in Hebrew. Then one of the men lifts up an octagonal-shaped box wrapped in several lengths of brightly coloured cloth and silk...Inside is a Torah, beautifully written on a leather scroll. I have seen some of these odd-shaped boxes being unloaded from the trucks when the last convoy arrived; every convoy brings them. These are the Scrolls of the Law which these people have carried with them for hundreds of miles on their journey here -- as they've carried them for hundreds of years -- guarding them with their lives, never giving them up, whatever else they had to abandon.

The spiritual life of Yemeni Jews centered primarily around the study of the Torah. They found in the Torah a refuge and fortress; it made a Jew aware that he is a member of a chosen people, which was privileged to receive the Torah. This world with its luxuries, its power and authority, was given to the nations of the world, but the Torah and the world to come was given to the Jews. By recognizing this, the Jews drew the

strength to withstand the waves of hatred constantly threatening to engulf them. Because of their adherence to the Torah, they did not assimilate into the dominant culture of Islam. Instances of assimilation were infrequent in Yemen, and the few who became Moslems did so to save their lives, either because they were starving or because they were sentenced to death and were given the choice of becoming Moslems or dying by the sword.

Torah study was always done in groups. There was no place for individual study as was the custom in other Jewish places of exile. Thus, the time of study was tied in with times of prayer, when the masses were to be found in the synagogue.

On weekdays, after a person ended his morning prayers, he would not rush to work but would linger a little with members of his group and study the "triango", a chapter in the Torah, a chapter of Mishne and a chapter of ethical writings. After his day's work, he cleansed his hands and face and hurried to the synagogue for the afternoon prayers. When he ended the afternoon and evening prayers, he listened to the lessons of the teacher in "Ein Yaakov" (a collection of Agadah from the Talmud) and to several laws from the "Shulchan Aruch."

Sabbaths and festivals were almost completely devoted to the Torah and prayers. On Sabbath they would rise early -- two or three hours before dawn -- and purify their souls with the recitation of Psalms. Every Jew hurried up from his bed to join the chorus of Psalms, to read the holy "Zohar", or to learn Mishne with the commentary of the Rambam. Approximately an hour after midday, they would stream again to the synagogue and to the houses of study to read "Zohar", to read "Rashi" on the weekly portion from the Torah, or to learn law from the Rambam or "Shulchan Aruch"; and, on festivals, to learn the laws appropriate to that festival.

In addition to group study, every Jew learned certain chapters on his own. The Jews of Yemen knew that every person is obligated to learn Torah whenever he has a free

moment. A person who did "clean" work, such as a weaver or a smith, would repeat what he learned in the Torah or Mishne as he worked. When a person traveled, he was not free to think idle thoughts, but he would recite Psalms one after the other. And when a person asked his friend how far it was from one village to another, the answer would be "As long as it takes to say such and such amount of Psalms and chapters of Mishne."

The Torah was thus the property of everyone. Therefore, the institution of the "yeshiva" never developed in Yemen as it did elsewhere, and there was no special class of scholars and students whose study was their livelihood and who would be dependent on community funds. There was another contributing factor to this: the Torah was holy and was not to be made into a means for livelihood. The rabbi and all others who served the community, did not accept money from the community, but had a trade and worked like the rest of the people.

Jacob Saphir's travel book on Yemen, which he visited in 1859, gives a brief picture of the life of a rabbi there.

"This little town has a great rabbi....mori Joseph ben Saadia is full of learning, piety, and earthly wisdom. He has a wonderful knowledge of the Bible and its commentaries, of the Talmud and the writings of Maimonides....He has himself written cabalistic works, takes an interest in astrology, makes up charms and amulets and writes out medical prescriptions, for which many non-Jews, too, come to him. In his dress he adheres to local custom, so that you might take him for a peasant or a shepherd. By profession he is a blacksmith, making arms, ploughs, spades, rakes and all the implements needed by the villagers. His workshop is a vault on the slope of the townhill. His aged father and his younger brother, learned men too, help him on the job; the old

man does the work at the bellows, the *mori* holds the iron and his brother wields the hammer. And even while thus engaged in hard toil, they talk of the Bible and other edifying things.

"Here in this vault he makes his rabbinical decisions, gives judgment and advice to all those who seek his counsel. Towards evening he gathers his tools and carries them on his back to the house. Then they all go to the synagogue...."

Along with the very positive aspects of this practice, there were also negative results. The Yemenite scholars, because they always had to earn a living, could never devote themselves entirely to Torah; therefore, there are relatively few great Torah scholars among Yemenite Jewry. The simple people, those living in poverty and worry about livelihood were not always free and not always able to concentrate enough for learning in depth. Their method of study was basically reading, so there are among them many who have committed large portions of the Torah and Midrash to memory. Since the Yemenite Jew studied the weekly portion -- twice in the Torah, once in its translation (into Aramaic -- Targum Onkelos) -- and read every morning in the "triple" and regularly from the prophets and holy writings, after a while he became quite expert not only in the Torah itself, but also in its grammar (punctuation). Any person called up to the Torah would read the portion over which he had recited the blessing (the concept of a "reader" was foreign to Yemenite Jewry). At parties and meals in honor of a commandment, Torah scholars debated with each other, discussed Biblical and halachic topics and quoted entire chapters from the "Agadah" and "Zohar" -- and all of this from memory. A person who would study from a book on these occasions was not given any honor for it. The words of the Torah said at the table before the saying of Grace at a public meal and in the individual home on the Sabbath and festivals were also said by heart.

The social life of the Yemenite Jew depended on special meals, weddings and circumcisions -- and, in contrast, times of sorrow -- when Jews sat together for long hours. Here the Yemenite Jew sought compensation for the robbing of his human dignity during the six days of the week. The main refuge for his spiritual energy was found between the walls of the synagogue where all his public and social activity was centered on a daily basis.

The Torah was explained and understood by the Yemenite Jew according to the Arabic translation of Rabbi Saadyah Gaon to the degree that his fluency in Arabic allowed, and according to Rashi's commentary, which he learned with the weekly reading of the Torah. He studied Agadah from the "Ein Yaakov" and from different Medrashim (Midrash Rabba, Midrash Tanchuma and the like), including Yemenite Midrash.

The poetic "Zohar", beclouded by holiness and mysteries, possessed a special place in Yemen. It was studied together and aloud, even if it was not completely understood, in order to become purified and also to hasten the redemption. In certain provinces, the study of "Zohar" became the principle one.

On halachic literature the central authority was the "Mishne Torah" of the Rambam, followed by the "Shulchan Aruch" of Rabbi Yosef Karo. Accompanying the study of these two works, they learned much Mishne with the commentary of Rabbi Ovadio; but, as was mentioned before, the study of Talmud was not widespread. Moral studies were from the works "Menoras HaMaor" of Rabbi Yitzchok Abuhav and "Reishis Chocho'mo."

Rabbis and scholars whose knowledge was broader and time more free glanced into other Torah works which had been accepted by other Jewish communities.

We can learn much about the culture of the Yemenite Jews from their attitude of respect for the Torah and for those who

studied it. Scholars and people occupied with Torah study were more respected than rich people and dignitaries. Monetary wealth was considered nothing next to wealth of learning, and there was a common saying that "there is no pauper but one who is poor in Torah."

We can understand their cultural level also from their attitude of respect toward books. There was no publishing house in the country, but many Jews learned how to write and copied books for themselves. Jews who did not know how to write or who had no time to write would hire a scribe who would copy books as they desired. The day a book was completed was a holiday, and sometimes the occasion was accompanied by a meal to commemorate it. There was no Jewish home without books, including even the poorest of homes. The books that were copied were mostly religious practical books, prayer books, Pentateuchs, Rambam, "Shulchan Aruch", the "Zohar" and the like. Families that were childless would hire a scribe to write for them a Torah scroll which would remain in their memory, and they donated it to the synagogue. It was a common sight to see little schoolchildren or adults sitting around one book placed on a stool, reading from it at all angles. No hand would touch it; only the eye followed each letter and word. It is no wonder, then, that books were passed from generation to generation, from father to son, and became a uniting factor.

Education

Education of the Sons

The mutual separation between the Moslems and the Jews, and the confinement of the Jews in their special neighborhoods and quarters resulted in the Jewish child growing up in a purely Jewish atmosphere, far from any foreign influence. Even in far-flung settlements where there was contact between the children,

parents and teachers made an effort to keep the Jewish children apart from the Moslem children lest "they become assimilated with the nations and learn their ways." The gentile nurse, who has a distinguished place in the world of Western Jewry, cannot be found in Yemenite Jewish society. They were very careful not to have gentile milk touch their children's lips nor to have a strange woman watch their children lest their Judaism be tainted.



A Yemenite Jewish family in Sana.

This is the way the Yemenite Jews looked and lived in Yemen before they were brought to the "Promised Land". On your next trip to the "Promised Land" see if you can find any traces of this way of life. Travelers to Israel maintain that they cannot find any trace of it.

The son was introduced to Judaism through several festive ceremonies. When he was eight days old, he was entered into the congregation of Israel through circumcision. On Simchas Torah of his first or second year, he was taken into the synagogue for the first time, accompanied by great rejoicing and food and drink. At the age of three, his hair was shaved off for the first time, amidst song and gaiety. At the sides of his head remained two curls, his "sidelocks", which would serve as an

external sign of his Jewishness, and which he would wear all his life. From the moment he began to babble, his father taught him the verses of Shema and the blessings to be made over food. At around age four, he accompanied his brothers to school, first as a passive listener and eventually as a student.

The period of childhood of the Yemenite child was very short. The hours spent alone or with children his age were very few. The Yemenite Jews retained a negative attitude toward childhood which was very common in the Middle Ages. According to this mentality, the evil inclination rules the child and evil dominates his soul. The role of the teacher is to destroy the evil and bad characteristics, and gradually to make the positive and good characteristics of the adult part of him. The most obvious sign of this is the absence of the concept "Bar Mitzvah" in the world of Yemenite Jewry. This ceremony, which symbolizes the initiation into adulthood for Jews of the West is not found at all among Yemeni Jews. The wearing of **tefillin** was not tied in with a specific time and certainly not with a ceremony or celebration. When the child grew up and learned the laws of **tefillin**, he did so before the age of 13 or afterwards, his father immediately bought him **tefillin**. Being called up to the Torah began when the child was only five or six years old. From the moment he learned to read in the Torah, he was called often to bless the sixth portion (which was especially for the children in Yemen) and "translated" when it was his turn, on the Sabbath designated for this.

The principle aim of education in Yemen -- aside from eradicating bad characteristics and developing the positive traits of a mature person -- was to prepare the child early for the life of the synagogue, the center of public and social life in Yemen. It is no coincidence that the school and the synagogue are called by the same name **kniss**: in many settlements, and especially small, isolated settlements, the synagogue even served as a school.

Three places shaped the education and culture of the child: the school, where he spent his entire day, from dawn to sunset; the synagogue, where he prayed and learned together with his father on the Sabbath and the home. The most important, though, was the synagogue. The atmosphere of holiness and company of the adults made a deep impression on the child's soul.

One could say, generally, that the religious and cultural education of the son was placed in his father's hands, while care of his physical needs were given to the mother, who was completely illiterate and could not have played any significant role in the education of the son. The child was constantly by his father's side, and would spend many hours with him at parties, at celebrations and among mourners. This constant contact with adults hastened his mental development and his general maturity. At a very young age, he took upon himself the



A Jewish silversmith, Moshe, and his son in San'a. Picture taken in 1938 by Hugh Scott.

responsibility of earning a living and shared in the burden of the house and the family.

Sabbaths and festivals, when the heads of the families had more time and peace of mind were appropriate times for educating. It was then that the father would test his son's knowledge and fill in the gaps left by the teacher. Since the learning in school revolved around saying by rote chapters of the Bible and Mishne with exact pronunciation and accent and melody without explanation of the matter learned, the father would use the time of meals and snacks to explain to his son what he had learned. When the father's occupation was at home, the son would also sit before him after school and read what he had learned that day. Orphans who did not have the opportunity to learn from their fathers, or poor children whose fathers were occupied with bringing bread into the house, received their explanation in the synagogue.



A street scene in the Jewish Quarter of San'a taken by Dr. Hugh Scott in 1938.

In contrast to the father's attitude, that of the mother was relaxed and pleasant. She was flowing with love and tranquility, and took the rôle of the angel-who preserves domestic peace, who stands to the right of the son when his father is angry. This kindness was remembered by the son his entire life. A great moment at the Yemenite wedding ceremony was when the mother of the groom appeared at the entrance of the men's hall: the groom would go out to meet her and ask her forgiveness for however he had sinned against her during his childhood. This was an expression of the kindness and good-will the son felt for his mother.

The teacher of small children did not have a high-ranking position. Since the society did not relegate importance to the period of childhood, and since the teacher's job was limited to study by rote of short paragraphs only, he did not necessarily need knowledge. Therefore, usually untalented people who had not succeeded in other professions were drawn to this post. In the villages and small settlements, the teachers were orphans or young men who had no livelihood since no adult would lower himself to this work. In the cities, by contrast, the teachers of young children were also scholars whose family profession had been teaching. In many villages, the rabbis also served as teachers, since they saw to all the religious needs of their congregation. It is clear, then, that the level of education was not unified.

The teacher in Yemen needed no preparation or certification. Anyone who so desired, or who was forced to teach by lack of anything else to do, would become a teacher. In small villages, the teacher often was not from that village. This type of teacher would eat his meals with his students' parents - each day in another house - and even sleep at their homes on a rotating basis. Changeover of teachers and giving children from one teacher to another was very common.

Nevertheless, one should not conclude that there was an apathetic attitude toward children's studies. To the contrary, there was great social and moral pressure on parents who neglected their children's education and measures were taken against them: they would not slaughter for them, nor would they be included in a quorum. Therefore, there was no Jewish child who did not spend time in school. Even in small settlements which had only a few families, the Jews would hire a teacher or send their children to a neighboring settlement. In comparison to the situation of the Moslems, Jewish education was general and comprehensive.

The religious school (**cheder**) was generally situated by the synagogue, in a room under the auspices of the congregation or one that was donated by someone for this purpose. The room also served as a hotel for poor wayfarers. These rooms which were in the basement-- which is usually used in Yemen for storage lacked air and light. They were furnished sparingly and poorly. The children sat on mats on the floor; their books rested on small wooden stools or desks of bricks and stones. The teacher's place was elevated so that he could see all the students. The books -- printed and handcopied -- were brought from home, where the children were taught to treat them especially carefully and with great respect. The book was open on the desk before the child, but his hand did not touch it; he only followed the text with his eyes. With a thin branch that the student held in his hand, he would show the text being read. Because of the dearth of books, many children shared one book.

Aside from the books and stools, there was no other decoration.

The teacher would supervise two groups himself. At the same time, his helper or one of the older students would busy himself with the little ones. At noontime the students would go home for lunch and return to school washed and clean, to resume learning until the evening. Toward evening, every child

would take out his evening bread and place it before the other students, and everyone would share what they ate. After the Mincha and Ma'ariv prayers the younger children went home, while the older ones resumed their studies, learning Agadah or "Ein Yaakov", which they would review with their fathers on Friday nights.

The aim of the education was, as mentioned, to prepare the child for the synagogue and this is what decided the curriculum in the school. Actually there were only four subjects studied: prayer, Bible, Mishne and Agadah.

Friday, which was a day off from school, gave the child an opportunity for freedom. On this day he could have some time to walk in the fields or in the streets of the city. In contrast to this, the Sabbath was a day replete with learning and prayer. For the child, it was full of studies and was sometimes a day of testing, full of tension. Friday night the child would arise with his father to read "Zohar" or "Psalms" and would be rewarded with a handful of raisins or perhaps a lump of sugar. If, on the Sabbath, it was his turn to be called to the Torah for the sixth portion or to translate the weekly portion, this Sabbath was devoted entirely to the test: for if he failed and made mistakes publicly, he would shame his father and his teachers. After the meal and the Grace, he would say from memory his "Keshet" from the Agadah, which he had learned in the evenings with his teacher. As was said, his father would also test him on the rest of the material he had learned that week.

In the afternoon, he would again sit with his father in the synagogue in order to read Rashi on the weekly portion and to learn halacha in the "Rambam" or "Shulchan Aruch". The Sabbath was, then, a great day in the spiritual world of the child.

In the schoolroom there was no time for play and games. Only infrequently was there an hour of enjoyment for the children -- when a woman who had just given birth, or a sick

person with vows to fulfill made a festive meal for them or gave them fruits.

The years of education were not limited; they were dependent primarily on circumstances. Most of the students ended their studies at the age of 12 - 13, when they were able to help support their families. Since each child learned his father's trade and this became his occupation, his studies did not end suddenly. Even when the youth worked with his father, he would visit daily for a number of hours the school or synagogue, where the adults were learning Mishne and halacha. Sometimes the father himself would teach him Torah as well as a trade. G. Wyman Bury, a visitor to Yemen, was "much impressed, on passing a Jewish cobbler's shop in a hamlet near Menakha, to see him teaching his children to read Hebrew Scriptures....I understand that this practice is general; it denotes a laudable standard of education and considerable stiffness of mental fibre in a difficult environment."

From the time the youth began to help his father with his work, his life became enmeshed with adult society. There were no groups of young people who spent time together, even for small talk. Only once in a while did a group of young people form for a party or prayer or to learn together. So, for example, the young people would have a party on the 7th day of Chanukah. In San'a the bachelors gathered on Friday nights in the great synagogue, "Alshich", to pour out their **Tehillim** and say prayers and "prayers for youth" (prayers for a successful match which every young person would say so that the Almighty would send him a good and righteous wife).

Education of the Daughters

The period of childhood for girls, too, was extremely brief. From the moment she could help her mother, she stopped playing with her friends and an air of serious femininity

I. G. W. Bury, *Arabia Infelix* (London, 1915).

enveloped her. Once she matured, she was considered eligible for marriage, and at the tender age of 13-14 she was already helping to take care of the family. The few years the girl spent with her mother served as a period of preparation for future family life and religion. Her education was received at home with the family, and it was the responsibility of her mother, grandmother, nurse and older sister. From them, she learned how to run a home, morals and fine character traits, and all the "oral culture" which comprised the spiritual heritage of the Yemenite woman. She also learned all the laws in all areas -- matters of purity and impurity, things that were prohibited or allowed, leavening and unleavened bread - and she was extremely scrupulous in these matters. An additional treasured possession went from the mouth of the mother to the daughter: a living folklore containing sayings, stories and poems.

In contrast to the boy, the girl received no formal education. She did not go to school or the synagogue. She did not learn Torah from her father or others. Chazal's saying "One who teaches his daughter Torah, teaches her impropriety" was realized in Yemen in its fullest sense.

The Yemenite woman knew neither reading or writing, nor was she familiar with the prayers. In the synagogue there was no special ladies section, and the women were not included in public prayer. Old women would go to the house adjacent to the synagogue to listen to the prayers. Young women would go there to hear their sons be called to the Torah or when it was their turn to translate publicly, which was an important event in family life. They could only recite the blessings over food in Hebrew, and their prayers were short and original in the spoken Arabic language. Along with this, the woman absorbed many Hebrew words from her husband and children, many verses of prayer and Bible, to the point where she understood the Hebrew language quite well.

The brief period of childhood and young adulthood was the

only preparation the girl received for her future life. Once she married, her lot was not easy. Her life was filled with nursing and raising children, and doing all the work of the house which was her domain -- grinding wheat with millstones every night, kneading and baking bread for every meal, drawing water from the well, gathering wood, laundering and the like. In addition, Yemenite women also tried their hand in business -- embroidering, weaving, braiding, making pottery and the like -- in order to help their husbands.



Jewish youths in San'a, Yemen, c. 1938



Jewish youth in San'a, Yemen, c. 1938

CHAPTER II

IMMIGRATION TO ISRAEL: OPERATION MAGIC CARPET

As we have seen in the first chapter, the life of the Yemeni Jew was generally not one of great oppression. Although there were times of persecution, Jews in Yemen had a great deal of religious freedom under Moslem rule and were afforded protection by the local noblemen. This is not to argue that no discrimination existed, but rather that the Jews were generally able to practice traditional religious observance even amidst a predominantly Moslem population.

For example, Sir Tom Hickinbotham wrote of the Jews in the Aden Protectorate:

There were then several thousand Jews living in the Protectorate with a greater measure of security than they enjoyed in Central Europe. They were the artisans and the gold- and silversmiths, and their houses were grouped together and generally slightly removed from the Arab quarters of the town. Every small town in the northwestern area had one of these Jewish quarters. They were not interfered with and they could and they did own land and they were useful to the Arabs and lived in peace with them. They were not involved in tribal disputes and it was considered something of a disgrace to kill a Jew.¹

Then, in 1949, the Israeli Zionists embarked on a plan which would shatter the religious life of the Yemeni Jews. They had decided to transport thousands of them from their homeland, where they had lived as their forefathers had for hundreds of years before them, to the newly-created "modern" State of Israel. They code-named this plan "Operation Magic Carpet",

1. Tom Hickinbotham, Aden, London, 1958.

by which they would eventually transport by plane nearly 100,000 Yemeni Jews to the Holy Land.

Over fifteen years passed before the details of the Zionist modus operandi became known. They were published in the Yemeni Jewish newspaper *Afikim* in 1966 in an article entitled "The Magic Carpet and Sorcery" by Chaim Amrani.

Consequences: The Lost Children

"They appear to be prophets of old; they are amazing people, absolutely amazing. They travel by foot for several weeks until they reach the camp for immigrants near Aden....Every one of them carries with him a Bible and almost every second one has with him a Torah scroll of parchment. This camp is only part of the desert and consists of several huts and tents, but they act as if they have come to paradise. We admit them to the planes and they are very confused but they don't utter a sound: they sit as if they are dumb. When they arrive at Lod, you can sense that they are very excited; they sway in place with shining eyes, saying nothing. They seem to me like people who are day-dreaming. The Yemenites are not the typical traveler that planes transport daily. They are, after all, a complete tribe and we have much satisfaction to be transporting them from the desert to secure territory."

--Robert MacGuire, a captain, and Hank Mullineaux, chief pilot, of "Operation Magic Carpet" in an interview with the "Voice of Israel" (1950).

"It is amazing that the Yemenites never asked me any questions. It seems that they trust us completely. They have handed over to us their fate! This is their first encounter with Israelis, the first time they are meeting their rescuers face-to-face. It is probably their first encounter with white people, and since we are dealing with matters unknown to them they think of us as superior people or small messiahs. They are, truly, people of faith."

--Mr. Lapidès, an American Jewish worker who ran the immigrant camp in Aden (1950)

"Suddenly the whole thing became clear to me: these people sitting here opposite me have come to a different world. What has happened to them is as overwhelming an experience as would be for me if I were sent to another planet.

"The fact that they are only stunned and not terrified as we would be if we stepped on Mars can be attributed to their accepting this change -- immense as it is -- as an additional miracle on their road to the promised land....These people have accepted the supernatural, and they are therefore armed against any shock. It is a faith with no blemish such as that of a person before he loses his innocence."

--Shlomo Barar, a writer for the *Voice of Israel* in his book, *The Magic Carpet*.

It was an experience which shall never be forgotten by those redeemed, but there were things which happened in the immigrant camps in Israel, sinister things: inhuman things, which planted terror in the hearts of scores of parents of young children of a year or two. It was an unknown hand which planned -- in a manner which has still not been explained -- the kidnapping of scores of babies: An organized chain worked in the camps and hid in several ways the children of these "prophets of old", of these "wonderful people" -- children who were reared by these "men of faith". These families, who overnight lost children, put their complete trust in the camp officials, its doctors and teams of nurses of the nurseries and hospitals. The evil hearts and eyes of some of these workers has darkened the fate of these families who still wait for the return of these children from the "nurseries" there sixteen and seventeen years ago.

Families wait longingly for their lost sons. Mothers dream of their children's return. On Friday nights, the memories of

these nursing children are called to mind and tears stream down from the eyes of mothers as their younger children try to comfort them, until their wine for kiddush is mixed with tears.

And when every family on Yom Kippur lights a "Yahrzeit" lamp for those who are no longer alive and recite the prayer for remembrance of the dead, these parents are again enveloped by misery because they know not their children's fates. The draft notices sent to these families for their "lost sons" reminds them of their eternal sorrow, and in this case the family has to run from one office to another to declare that ever since the "little messiahs", their children have disappeared. Perhaps this irony hints at the fact that their children are alive, perhaps.

In Yosef Tzureal's essay (**Maariv**), it was stated: "They are trying to convince us that it is in the best interest to let this painful episode remain cloaked in secrecy". "Only insensitive people would say this, people with no conscience, no humanitarian feelings. The parents' wounds will not heal until a certain unequivocal answer is given them: "The child is alive" or "The child is dead."

To our dismay, all the organizations that should have revealed this painful matter have turned away from it, some unintentionally and some intentionally. The Department of Welfare of the State of Israel knows of "families who have children that are not their own - with no legal permission." The Department of Welfare has "legalized" certain children, as was testified by the legal advisor of the Department of Welfare, the erudite lawyer Amram Blum (Yosef Tzurial, **Maariv**). Who gave the Department of Welfare authority to legalize children whose parents are looking for them these seventeen years? For seventeen years, the adoption records have been closed to these parents who are searching for their children. Will the legal advisor for the State of Israel finally make it possible for them to peek into the records so that these children can be returned to their mothers who long for a definite answer?

One cannot doubt that some of these children were smuggled out to other countries. But those stalwarts of Israel who brought Eichmann (may his memory be erased) alive to Israel could, if the job were handed over to them by the authorities, put an end to this tragedy.

Yosef Ramati, the Agency representative in the immigration camp at Rosh HaAyin in his conversation with **Maariv** writer Mr. Tzureal, attributed this mysterious matter to a "lack of clear administrative documents" in the camps. How did this Jewish Agency representative do nothing while as he said innocently:

1) He "knows of incidences where childless families came to the immigrant camps in order to adopt an immigrant child."
2) "Certainly it was probable that children were taken from the hospital with no permission."

That he believes Mrs. Tanami's story - "We gave Yehuda to the nursery at Rosh HoAyin when he was three months old. I would go daily to nurse him. I came early once; the man who cleaned the nursery told me to wait outside. I stayed next to the window. Two women were near my Yehuda's bed. They argued. Each one said: "This is for me." After that they spoke in a strange tongue. I went to the second side where I heard two nurses talking. One said: "So what? She has many children." The second one said, "Good, but this is still not allowed to be done." I asked to be admitted to the nursery. I went in and one of the nurses told me, "Yehuda is dead."

Our question is: how can we understand Mr. Ramati's statements above, in view of the fact that in these immigration camps there was such strict surveillance of who was entering and leaving the camp that only people with permits could enter.

As is recalled, the government of that time fell because of the wholesale assimilation of Yemenite youth, pure and holy boys and girls, brought up in an orthodox and traditional manner,

whose entire being said "Holy" with not even a step off the path of tradition. A few weeks after their arrival in Israel, the secular movement swooped down upon them with full cooperation of the camp management and directed these innocent boys and girls to openly secular kibbutzim and organizations. How shocked were their parents when they returned for a brief visit after a few months of assimilation in the kibbutzim and organizations -- the boys minus their sidelocks and bareheaded, the girls immodestly dressed, and especially when the children came with heretical arguments. They were not ready to observe Sabbath and they were too lazy to go to the synagogue.

The parents stood opposite them and cried out: "What is our fate! Are we to say in our prayers, 'Why have been exiled to our land' instead of 'exiled from our land.'"



Talmud Torah children in San'a. A picture no longer seen in the Holy Land.

Other painful episodes darken the halo of "Operation Magic Carpet" and they testify that in all aspects - material, spiritual and cultural - the numbers of this group have been exploited and their rights have been abused by unscrupulous people, while the messengers of destruction in white of 1949-1950 hid their children.

While these terrible things were occurring, a Jew in Yemen wrote: "We sat in exile and awaited redemption; we know not when it will come. One went to the capitol and, upon returning, informed us: 'There is a kingdom in Yisroel', and another Jew who just now set foot on holy ground writes: 'On my way to Yisrael, my soul must certainly have escaped -- for I am now in Paradise.'

Really?....

Early Zionist Evacuation Attempts

When, toward the end of the last century, the curtain was lifted on the Yemeni scene, it revealed the most primitive of all the Arab lands - and so Yemen has remained to this day. It is a country of mountains, mosques and mule roads, semi-nomadic tribesmen and sabre-rattling, beturbaned sheikhs, of poor peasants plodding behind ox-drawn wooden ploughs and turning the soil almost with their bare hands, eking out a meagre living on terraced rocky plateaux in the rugged highlands. It has few large cities, few roads and no railways. It is still isolated from the world, and guards its isolation so jealously that even today it has vastnesses where no stranger has set foot.

Its population - estimated at 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 in 1950 - has never been counted in a census, for counting people might give them the "evil eye". All powers in the State up to the revolution in 1962 were vested in the person of the king and imam, who was both secular and spiritual sovereign and master of life and death over his subjects.

The Imam Yahya, who ruled for forty-four years before he was murdered in 1948, gave most ministerial posts to his numerous sons and administered his country like a feudal overlord. He paid personal attention to every minute detail, and no wheel turned in the country without his consent.

He was, from his own point of view, rather tolerant with the Jews, too. He had the old Moslem respect for Ahl el Kitab, the "People of the Book", and he often called the Chief Rabbi of San'a to his palace to hold long scholarly discussions. During his long rule, the Jews suffered no mob violence, pogroms or rioting of the kind occurring in some other countries. In one respect the Imam Yahya Ibn Mohammed el Mansour ibn Yahya Hamid al-Din - to give him his full name - excelled even the old caliphs. From 1921 he brutally enforced a law whereby every Jewish child whose father had died was taken to a State orphanage and forcibly converted, even if its mother were alive. Hundreds of such children were hunted and captured in the 1920's and 30's and this to the Jews became one of the worst inflictions; it was why Jews began to seek avenues of rescue for the orphans at first and later for themselves, by leaving their ancestral land. In addition, hunger and epidemics forced them to seek refuge in British-controlled Aden.

In 1911, the Zionists of Palestine introduced into Yemen, in the disguise of a religious emissary, a man whose mission was not to sell books: He was to tell the Jews of the colonization work going on in Palestine and to call on them to go en masse and join in the pioneering effort. He brought along letters, questions and responsa from the Zionist rabbi, Abraham Isaac Kook, of Jaffa at the time. These letters were to fool the Yemeni rabbis into believing they were dealing with religious people. Kook's letters exhorted them to come to the Holy Land and also requested them to define their customs and traditions. It was hoped that he might eventually persuade many, or even

all of them, to move to the Holy Land. Here, for the first time, we meet with a Zionist plan for a total evacuation of a Jewish community. This emissary, Samuel Yavnieli, finally had to leave. About 1,500 Jews followed him to Palestine in 1911.

Misery and persecutions did the rest. They began to crawl out of Yemen, stealthily and at great peril to their lives, selling their properties for next to nothing, simply abandoning them, moving on foot by night and hiding by day in caves and shelters in the rocks. All the way, over the border toward British-held Aden, which became their escape gate for Palestine. The stream moved unequally along the hazardous course, widening at times when the imam closed an eye on their flight, narrowing down when he enforced the ban more rigorously. About 1,200 Yemenites reached Palestine in this way between 1927 and 1931; over 4,000 between 1933 and 1935; 1,104 over the next three years; 90 in 1939; 80 in 1940; 51 in 1941; and some 3,000 between then and 1944.

Hundreds perished on the trek before even making Aden.



Shmuel Yavnieli -- Zionist emissary, center, posed with Yemeni rabbis. Hegreva beard and peyos and put on a prayer shawl, all to fool the Yemenis into believing he was a religious Jew.

Zionists Purchase Yemeni Jews from the Imam

But the plan for an entire Jewish community to leave their ancestral homeland, where they had lived and prospered for thousands of years, since the time of the First Temple's destruction in Jerusalem, did not meet with much success.

It was only after the establishment of the Zionist State and the need the Zionists had for immigrants to displace the Arab population of Palestine that they turned to a new method - buying the Jews from the imam and sultans.

The Zionists had to work on three separate fronts to bring about the immigration of the Yemeni Jews in toto.

1) They had to receive permission from the sultans in the Aden Protectorate (South Yemen) to permit the Jews of Yemen to cross their territory to get to Aden and, in the same vein, to get the sultans of Southern Arabia and the Hadrahmut to let their own Jews leave as well.



The Imam Yahya.



Imam Ahmad

2) They had to get permission from the Imam Ahmad to let the Jews leave; otherwise, it would be only a trickle and only those who would take the chance.

3) And they had to make the Yemeni Jews want to leave. Concerning the first two, the British authorities in Aden gave the Zionists all the help they needed, acted as go-betweens and, in the case of the imam, went to him personally to arrange the price and conditions. Up to this day, it has remained almost impossible to get the inside story from the British and, on the Zionist side, no one as yet has fully described the entire affair.

S. Barer in "The Magic Carpet" (1950) gives some details of the dealings:

What followed is best told as it was described to me by Schweid, the chief assistant to Viteles in the American Joint Office in Tel Aviv. Schweid had played a leading part in organizing the first evacuation and was to be equally prominent in the subsequent events. He was in Aden in March, 1949.

"Shortly after the closing of Old Hashed Camp," Schweid said, "Dr. Koubovitzky of the World Jewish Congress happened to arrive in Aden. But about that time, there were persistent reports that approximately 100 Jews from Beidha on the south-eastern border of Yemen, had made their way down to Lodhar. They had been sighted there and at Abian some time in February, but after that all trace had been lost of them. It was said that they had been robbed and then put back across the border into Yemen, but repeated attempts to find out the truth of these reports led to nothing.

"One day Koubovitzky came to me and said he had heard from Selim Banin, head of the Aden Jewish community, that the Sultan of Auddally was in town.

He suggested that we go and see him and try to find out from him directly what had happened to these Jews. This was arranged, and accompanied by Banin and Obadiah Tuviah, a Yemenite acting as liaison man with the Jewish Agency office in Aden, we met the sultan. He told us that the 100 or 120 Jews whose fate was worrying us had not been deported, but were safe in his territory. We also gathered from him that he had some 2,000 native Aoudally Jews among his subjects. When we asked about their condition, we were surprised to hear him reply: 'They are worse off than my lowliest Arabs.' We asked whether he could let us know why the Jews were badly off. The Sultan's reply was simple. For some time, he said, his Jewish subjects had been engaged in preparations to move to Israel. They had sold everything and given up their trades, and now they were neither here nor there.

"The Sultan turned down our request for an emissary to be allowed to visit them, on the ground that this would create such a stir among the Jews that his own Arabs would become attentive, and this might possibly lead to some friction. It was best to leave things alone. How then could we help our brethren, we asked. We could send them money, the Sultan replied."

Barer further quotes the Zionists as saying that the sultan himself had brought up the idea of taking the Jews to Israel, and then the Zionists approached the British. But later deals with the British and the sultans raise grave doubts about this part of the story the Zionists wanted to picture.

Barer continues:

Obadiah Tuviah, the Yemenite Jewish Agency

man who had been present at the meeting with the sultan, flew to Lodhar by R.A.F. plane to continue discussions with him there. Schweid returned to Tel Aviv, but talks were continued in Aden by the local representative of the American Joint Office and the Jewish Agency.

Everything obviously depended on the British. If they were helpful, then the cooperation of the sultans and tribal chieftains astride the exodus route could probably be secured, as Dr. Vainstein, a Jewish Agency representative, put it "by a purely commercial transaction". It could in fact be bought.

Here Barer says it as it is, and as it was! Then Barer continues and gets to the imam as well...

The two Englishmen estimated that there would be 10,000 Jews trying to leave Yemen over the next year or so. Subject to the two conditions already communicated in the letter to Banin, they were quite prepared to facilitate their passage through the Protectorate. They would regulate the inflow by arrangement with the sultans. They did not anticipate any difficulties from that quarter, and they would even arrange for Vainstein to meet some of the Arab rulers directly concerned in the scheme. The going was so good that at one point in the talk the suggestion was even thrown in that it might be possible to obtain the imam's approval for the project "at a certain price". Vainstein ventured to ask whether it were not possible to put him in touch with quarters through whom he might bring the matter directly before the imam. The British replied with a diplomatic promise to "consider" this request.

But within a month, the picture had changed from 10,000 in

a year to a possible 20,000 in sixty days.

For in the meantime Ahmad al-Nasir li-Din Allah, King and Imam, at a time when the Arab world was bent on a war with the new State of Israel, had announced that the Jews of the Yemen might go in peace.

Barer continues:

What made the ruler of Yemen suddenly throw open the gates of his country in a reversal of policy?

For some thirty years or so, since 1921, Jews leaving Yemen had had all their property confiscated by the State. In 1929, the Iman Yahya had forbidden them to leave the country altogether. In 1948 Yahya was killed, and under his son Ahmad the ban was not always enforced. By and large, however, the several thousand Jews who had reached Aden and created the first phase of the Magic Carpet were people who had escaped secretly, and completely without means. But now the imam allowed all Jews to leave without hindrance, though knowing that they would proceed en masse to the State of Israel, with whom all Arab countries were technically at war. What were the new imam's reasons for this change of heart and policy? Under what particular circumstances did he issue his writ of free exit to the Jews?

Dr. Vainstein reported: "The British think there is a possibility that the imam, too, may agree to the Yemen cum Aden Project." Why the British thought this is not known precisely, but Dr. Vainstein's report contains one passage that may provide some clue.

From Vainstein Report: Talk with a High British Security Official, May 14.

"In the evening, met Mr. --- who expressed doubts about the success of the Yemen cum Aden

Project, because as soon as the imam got wind of it he would bar the exit from his country. The imam, he said, needed the Jews because they were his only craftsmen, watchmakers, jewellers, tailors, cobblers and carpenters, and their departure might ruin Yemen economically. In ---'s opinion, we would have to reach some agreement with the imam.... The imam's personal representative in Aden might agree to mediate between us and the imam regarding the price."

This is what Barer quotes, hiding the name of the high British officer.

At the same time, in Tel Aviv, Barer continues, "Viteles was considering the possibility of approaching the imam on behalf of the American Joint office. The British would not agree to this proposal on the grounds, first, that they saw no justification for an approach to the imam by an American organization. That was on May 20. The British wanted to do it on their own. Four days later the news, at first only half-believed, of the imam's decision reached the Jews in Aden, and was flashed to Tel Aviv and thence to the American Joint's headquarters in Paris."

The Zionists did not care to consider how the Jews would leave Yemen. They knew quite well they had to go by foot. They knew very well that, from all the areas they were going to come many were great distances, but this did not interest them one bit.

It was subsequently established that the Jews, in the course of that summer, set out from nearly 800 localities scattered all over Yemen -- a country covering some 75,000 (estimated)

square miles. They did not proceed from these places all at the same time, nor in the same fashion. From some cities like San'a, Haulan, Sharrab, Sa'da, Ibb, Dhaman, Ta'izz and a few others, they went on the road in fairly compact and continuous groups of forty or fifty or 100 persons. Of the smaller localities, many were emptied of their Jews at one stroke, overnight. From dozens of villages they proceeded in small detachments, individual families, a man and his wife and his children.

They descended mostly from the densely populated central and southern highlands, but they also came from the far north, whence they had to traverse the mountain ranges extending in almost an unbroken line from the Saudi Arabian border for 600 miles across the whole length of Yemen. They came from the humid lowlands and the hot, sandy desert stretches along the Red Sea in the west; and also, in a completely different direction, from the remote wild regions of the Hadhramut, lying outside Yemen and beyond the frontier of even the most primitive civilization, where the end of Arabia touches the Indian Ocean. They came from places where the existence of Jews had never been known or suspected. Some made the journey in ten or twelve days. These were the lucky ones. For some of them it took four or six weeks; for some, a harrowing three months.

A people wandered over treacherous mountains, scrambling up and down steep slopes, along zigzagging donkey tracks, making their way across dried-up river beds and boulder-strewn valleys, carrying with them their bundles and their babies, a multitude of individual fates. It is impossible to give more than a rough composite sketch of the trek of these thousands.

Barer then goes into details about the Zionist emissaries:

There was a secretive man in the camp, a dark-skinned Jew who often dressed up as an Arab and whose movements were a mystery. It was known that he had contacts reaching up right across the border

and into the unknown and inaccessible Yemen and was engaged on a mission to organize the exodus of the Jews, though no one knew how he was setting about it.¹

Later I met Tsadok, the mystery man who is really in charge of these relations. He is a Yemeni Jew himself who escaped from Yemen to Tel Aviv twenty-one years ago. A slim man with black eyes and a lean, ascetic face, he has an air of stern determination. He looks and acts the man who has important secrets on his mind. (He had a room to himself in one of the wooden barracks, where I later often saw him sitting up late in the night going over densely written sheets of scroll which were brought to him by the elders of the camp community, apparently letters from Yemen. Sometimes he sat closeted with these elders for hours, and exchanged with them little leather bags filled with silver riyals, one of the currencies of the East which still bear the effigy of Maria Theresa. Occasionally, you would see him driving off in a jeep, wearing a turban, and then you knew that a convoy of Yemenites would soon be arriving -- perhaps in a day, perhaps in three.)

¹ Lawrence Resner in *Eternal Spring* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1951), verifies the existence of this mysterious man: "I have met the man who, through a purely fortuitous circumstance, was able to work out an arrangement with representatives of the imam to let the entire Jewish population of the Yemen leave for Israel. He paved the way literally for the mass exodus of the Jews of Yemen. He refused to let me use his name and under no circumstances would he disclose the name of the British intermediary who helped him make this historical exodus possible." (p. 161)

At first he was wary of me, but after we had spoken for a while he opened up a little, and later even seemed glad to unburden himself, like a man weighed down too long by silence and secretiveness. He warned me, though, that his work could be endangered by the publication of even the smallest hints. His own name, nay-- the very existence of someone like him at Hashed must never be mentioned.

When I said that I had myself seen a report in the Tel Aviv **HaBoker** some time ago of a Jewish emissary 'penetrating' into Yemen, he related with some bitterness the trouble that report had caused him. He had, in fact, been inside Yemen on four occasions during the last six months. The fifth time, following that newspaper story, there were instructions from the imam to arrest him. He was now waiting for a permit to enter Yemen a sixth time.

He revealed that his chain of communication is so organized that the departure of Jews from any point in Yemen gets known to him here at Hashed almost immediately. To some extent, he directs the routes and timing of the exodus, according to fluctuations in his relation with the various sultans. As he explained it, these relations have a solid business footing, including as they do price agreements for the safe conduct of the Yemenites in transit. Rivalry between the sultans, as well as normal business competition, sometimes come into play. He told me of a deal with Sallah ibn Hussein, the Audally Sultan, whereby the ruler reduced the fee in his territory by 50 percent. This was then used to bring down the price in a neighboring sultanate. The price is levied on the Jews as a "head-tax", or customs fee. Not all the money,

he says, gets into the pockets of the sultans, as their own customs people often cheat them out of it, accepting bribes in lieu of fees. "This," he said, patting his belt and clinking a few of the large Maria Theresa silver pieces, "open all roads in this part of the world."

Joseph B. Schechtman relates in **On Wings of Eagles** that Tsadok (Joseph Zadok) negotiated successfully with the Sultan Nasr ibn Abdallah in Azzam for the entire remaining Jewish community in Habban. (The Habban Jews were devoutly religious and had two synagogues and two elementary schools to help them to continue their tradition. They claimed descent from the tribe of Judah, and Schechtman says, "the fact that there are among them neither Cohanim nor Leviim is an evidence of their ancient origin.")¹ Tsadok paid a large amount of money to the Sultan and gave extra gifts to him and to the Vizier. Tsadok himself relates this incident in **B'Saarot Teyman**.

The harrowing experience of thousands of Jews, men, women, and children waiting on the long border, without food and lodging under the open sky, fooled by the Zionists in making the long journey, is continued:

They congregated mainly in two regions, at Shureika and Rahida, the latter about ten miles from the frontier.

Of their plight while they waited a long four weeks for the frontier to be opened again, we know only from two sources. "And there came a day," reads the letter of a Yemenite "when the stress of hunger prevailed, and there was no bread for our mouths. And the heart sorrowed for the infants....Arabs came and brought us food and said: 'Give us money, and

1. Schechtman, **On Wings of Eagles**, p. 84.

you will get bread....' There was no doctor, and no medicines, and no drop of milk to keep the infants alive. There was only a prayer in our mouths to the L-rd that He should help. Many were seized with trembling of the body as though with fever (malaria)... and there were women near to give birth.... One day a messenger from Israel spoke before us, and strengthened our hearts...."

The messenger was Tsadok making his first entry into Yemen. For some time, the Jewish Agency leaders had been considering sending an emissary into Yemen to organize the exodus as near at source as possible. The problem was whether to risk smuggling someone over the border - a course consistently opposed by the American Joint Office - or wait for the eventuality of the imam granting someone a permit. When the emergency arose on the frontier, a permit was obtained for Tsadok. He traveled with another camp-worker, carrying fifty-three sacks of bread and quantities of flour, oil, dates, salt and baby-biscuits, as well as 5,000 rupees for cash distribution among the stranded waiting and wandering about on the frontier.

In his own words "The food I took with me was little, far too little for the mass of stranded people suffering terribly from hunger and sickness. They camped in the open. I found men, women and children disintegrating, dying a slow death, minute by minute, lying on the ground with swollen bellies, others with open wounds. No doctors were allowed to go out to them, but 150,000 paludrine pills were eventually sent; only they could not take the place of food. There was no one to help them; only the savage sun looking down. I get sick when I remember some

of the scenes I saw. Worms crawling in the festering wound of a man, eating his flesh. Men in pain pleading with me; cut off my leg. I estimate that 400 or 500 died in those two places alone in a few weeks. I don't know how many perished in other places...."

And all this for what? To provide the new state with cannon fodder, displace the homogeneous Arab population and, last but not least, to transform an entire religious community into atheists.

Quoting from a camp doctor at Aden

"Four out of five had caught the fever, a particularly virulent form of malaria tropica. The doctors found it attacked the body about eight times more strongly than in usual malaria cases. The general condition of those coming in now was worse than that of any who had reached Hashed before. They were all starved, walking skeletons. Their power of resistance was nil, and for a fortnight or so there were seven or eight deaths each day." (Figures I obtained show that 168 Yemenites died at Hashed during the peak month of September, in which 12,033 new arrivals were registered. In October, when the influx was 6,856, as many as 161 died. Medical director Dr. Friedmann, who came to the camp shortly before the border was reopened, says that many arrived in a state beyond help, and most of the deaths occurred within twenty-four hours of their reaching the camp.)

Barer states:

"Last autumn up to 14,000 immigrants, reaching here in a ghastly state of exhaustion, had to camp in the open, covering every inch of the ground, unprotected from the sun and sandstorms. Most

arrived suffering from malaria and tropical ulcers."

This is how the Zionists atheists prepared for the total evacuation they pursued -- only interested that the stronger, who will survive, make it, for the world cannot hold and support the weak.

Barer further states:

The erection of the tents began at the end of October. On October 28, four convoys arrived at the gate at a few hours interval from one another, with 860 people. The next day only twenty-three came (one of them was dead in the car). On October 30, there were still 549 arrivals. But on the 31st, for the first time since the reopening of the border, there were no convoys and none on the following day, November 1st. The last big wave had spent itself. That day the camp population was down again to 4,300.

Two weeks later, Tsadok entered Yemen once again -- this time on an important mission. He was to try to bring some organization into the movement of the Yemenites. He was also going to find out how many Jews were still left there, how many of them were in doubt about going to Israel and why. He was to call on them to proceed now, while the going was good. He traveled on a permit from the imam, using the name of Yussuf Sallah and posing as a local Jew who, though living outside the country at Aden, had never been to Falastin, or Palestine.

Tsadok made contact with some Arabs whom he knew and whom he bribed. His jeep was provided with a police escort. When he came back to Ta'izz, on his return journey to Aden, the mudir gave him his exit visa together with a permit for re-entry into Yemen.

During his tour of eleven days, Tsadok visited several southern cities and villages, including Qada, Supol and Sayani. He met groups of Jews who were on their way out of the country. He gave money to some in need, and took over money and valuables carried by others.

Wherever he went, he had the Jews of the vicinity assemble at the synagogue for a "sermon", telling them all they wanted to know about Israel.

Barer again states some clue as to what was going on and names fictitiously another man besides Tsadok who dealt with the bribery of the sultans and the enticement of the Jews.

Jewish Agency emissaries were to be stationed at each of the assembly points to organize and regulate the movement. They would be in touch with Aden by wireless. One of the political officer's assistants, an Arab, was instructed to make all necessary arrangements and to take the Jewish emissaries out to the appointed stations when the time came. The Jewish Agency office there acted as a listening post for collecting news from behind the wall and for passing information across it. There was especially one man, whose name I shall give as Yehiel Kassar, who carried on a vast correspondence with trusted friends and community leaders in the towns and villages of his homeland. The letters passing between him and them were conveyed by the ordinary mails; they used no code, and were written sometimes in Hebrew and sometimes in Arabic in a floral style, using much biblical language. Israel was hardly ever mentioned by either sender or recipient.

It is interesting to note that the Arabs in general were not keen in letting the Jews go. These same people had lived

OPERATION MAGIC CARPET

together for over twenty-five centuries and more. Barer speaks of one such sultan in the Aden Protectorate, who did not want to refuse the British but had one request.

He turned to Vainstein and said that for his part, he also had a request to make. There were no Jews in Beihan, and he asked to be allowed to keep in his territory a few hundred of those crossing it from Yemen to enable him to fulfill the Islamic injunction requiring Moslems to extend protection to Ahl al-Kitab, "the people of the Book". He considered protecting the Jews an important religious duty, but was in the unfortunate position of having no one to protect. (Allen later told Vainstein that the Sheriff had once before approached the British in Aden with a similar request.) Vainstein was somewhat taken aback, but he recovered quickly. He fully understood the Sheriff's feelings, he said, but asked him to appreciate likewise that about the highest religious duty in the life of a Jew was to go and live in the Holy Land.

Undaunted, the Sheriff came back with a plea that, for his peace of mind, he be given at least some old infirm Jews, whose physical condition might make their not going to the Holy Land appear less of a sin in the eyes of the Jewish G-d. The Jewish Agency representative has not recorded how this strange request of a tribal chieftain in the old, patriarchal tradition was met.

Soon thereafter, on a Sunday evening in September 1950, the last two Magic Carpet planes flew to Israel with nearly 200 passengers aboard, including eighteen camp workers, headed by Lapides. Sixty-six more Habbanis and 111 Yemenis stepped onto the tarmac at Lydda. Among them were twenty-six Jews -- the last to come out of Yemen -- who had been spared the trek

GENOCIDE IN THE HOLY LAND

of the people before them. They had traveled from San'a to Aden in the imam's personal plane. The king had two aircraft, the only ones in Yemen at the time which were sometimes chartered for special flights. He had put one of them at the disposal of the last two dozen Jews in his capital, for a hefty price and as the conclusion of the exodus.

That Sunday morning, at Hashed, a ceremony had taken place in the presence of representatives of the British authorities, the American Joint Office, the Jewish Agency and Near East Air Transport. A monument was unveiled in the cemetery of Sheikh Othman, and a smaller one in the graveyard nearer the camp itself, where lay buried over 500 Yemenite Jews. Scrolls with their names were placed in each monument. Then the camp was officially declared closed.



The Skymaster that took them on Operation Magic Carpet.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN ISRAEL: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND
OBSERVANCE DENIED

Upon arriving in the Holy Land, the Yemeni Jews were put in transit camps whose operation was funded largely by money raised in the U.S.A. by United Jewish Appeal. The Yemenites had gone to Israel expecting the opportunity to give full expression to their traditional religious observances. They looked upon their "deliverers", the Zionists, as "little messiahs", for they had taken them to their beloved Holy Land.

But the Yemenites were sadly misled, as they were soon to discover. Shocking things occurred in the camps, not the least of which was the attempt by the Jewish Agency to deny religious education to the Yemeni children. When the Yemenites protested, they became virtual prisoners in the camps, which were surrounded by barbed wire. It also became apparent that the Histadrut parties, Mapai and Mapam, had a program of their own for the immigrants, involving isolation of the religious newcomers in Histadrut-controlled camps and the imposition of a Zionist indoctrination upon adults and children alike.

This sad state of affairs became known after several rabbis and yeshiva students attempted to visit the camps to give the children religious instruction and encouragement and to pray with the adults. Also, the few religious **madrichim** in the camps informed visitors and complained to the Government about the subversion, on the part of the camp directors and **madrichim**, of their efforts to teach Torah.

Even Zionist Chief Rabbis Herzog and Uziel and Knesset member David Zvi Pinkas helped to publicize the situation, along with the religious parties of Israel. A flurry of articles and editorials in Israeli newspapers resulted. But the Jewish Agency, which was responsible for the operation of the camps, took umbrage with these protests and mounted a "counter-offensive", denying the charges.

Zionist Propaganda Concerning Religious Education in the
Immigrant Camps

American Jewry, for example, was given quite a different picture of the situation of religious education in the transit camps, as this article published in **The Day** (January 27, 1950) shows:

All reports regarding alleged discrimination in the religious education of children are unfounded. More than one third of the children now in the Israeli camps are getting a strictly religious training. It is the Israeli government and not the Jewish Agency that deals with the education of the children. **The Day** objectively reported on this matter, and as a responsible major newspaper did not go through with the propaganda drive against the Agency and the Israeli government. This is the gist of the declaration made yesterday to **The Day's** reporter by Zvi Lurie, head of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency in New York.

Lurie declared to **The Day** that back in November 1949 the Jewish Agency and the Israeli government reached an agreement concerning the education problem for Jewish children.

In the transit camps of Israel there is a tuition-free, uniform school system. All children in camps whose parents request religious education for them obtain this a few hours daily, and special religious educators have been appointed for this purpose. When the parents and their children leave the camps, the children are obliged to attend government schools in which they also receive religious education at the expense of the government.

The same arrangement is provided for orphans, who, as is known, are the responsibility of the Youth Aliyah. Whether the child receives a religious or

secular education is ascertained by a commission of experienced educators depending on the child's home and background, after which he is sent to the suitable school. Thus, the entire outburst from the religious bloc is artificially blown up and has no real basis, Lurie stressed. Recently the Jewish Agency established forty-eight colonies, in which there are, of course, religious schools. To build new religious schools they need additional large funds. To educate one child in Israel, stated Lurie, costs \$4.80 per month.

In the kibbutzim and moshavim, classrooms are packed with forty children per room. Fifteen thousand belong to Youth Aliyah, while the government takes care of the education of 100,000 children. For this, a budget of \$24,000,000 (\$11,000,000) is needed. Not considered is the difficult financial position of the Jewish Agency to plan continued immigration of additional children. At the gates of Israel are 12,000 children living in the camps of Marseilles, Casablanca and southern Italy. In the Israeli camps are 1,500 religious children. To absorb and educate all these children takes huge sums, and American Jewry should know this and increase their contributions accordingly.

It is also fitting at this opportunity to inform American Jewry that in December 1949 the Jewish Agency gave Mizrahi \$1,000,000 and the Agudah \$430,000, with the clear understanding that the major portion of these funds be used for religious education for children in the Israeli camps. One may ask himself what are the real reasons for the unfounded charges of the religious bloc?

For example, Lurie explained further, in the

American press it was charged that in Israeli camps the sidelocks of religious children were forcibly cut off. The truth of the matter is that physicians who examined some children ordered their sidelocks cut off for sanitary reasons.

In conclusion, the head of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency in New York said that Prime Minister Ben-Gurion ordered the establishment of two committees, one to investigate the entire issue and also to find out who is responsible for the smear campaign in America, and a second to find a solution regarding future education of children. The most important thing at present, Lurie declared, is that Jews in America should respond warmly to the call of the UJA and support the upbuilding of the Jewish State.

Religious Bloc Protests.

The religious bloc responded to this with a declaration published in the *Jewish Morning Journal* on February 2, 1950.

At a special meeting of the Religious Bloc of America, Monday, Shvat 12th, with the active participation of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of America, and headed by Rabbi Israel Rosenberg, President of the Union, the urgent problem of religious education in Israel was discussed.

The gathering noted with great surprise and bitterness the statement made public in the *Jewish Day* on Friday, Shvat 9th, by Zvi Lurie, head of the Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency, in connection with the problem of religious education in Israel. It was resolved to make public the following statement: Zvi Lurie pretends to deny everything. He says in so many words that all the communications

concerning discrimination against religious education have no basis whatsoever and are only figments of the imagination. It, therefore, follows naturally that all the accusations are unfounded. However, in the same statement, Lurie relates that Prime Minister Ben-Gurion ordered the formation of two committees to look into the matter. If Ben-Gurion considers the accusations true enough to have two committees formed to investigate and to find a solution to the acute problem, it becomes incomprehensible how the Director of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency could issue a statement denying the existence of any such problem and claiming it to be only imaginary.

Lurie and his friends in the Jewish Agency commit a grave mistake in believing that they can mislead American Jewry with preposterous statements. The issues at stake are too earnest and acute for irresponsible utterances.

Every Jew in America who holds Israel dear to his heart was deeply upset to read the daily telegrams arriving from responsible religious leaders in Israel. For months now these great personalities have been sounding the alarm about the terrible discrimination being practiced against religious education in and out of the immigrant camps. The telegrams, letters, editorials and news items in the religious press of Israel, i.e. the **Hatzofeh**, **Hamevaser** and other important newspapers tell the actual story of what is happening in the camps.

Religious teachers and counselors are not permitted to enter the immigrant camps despite the fact that counselors and teachers of the leftist parties are permitted to enter and to open their schools in

which the Torah and observance of G-d's commandments are not taught. The irony of it all is that this transpires in the camps where the immigrants and their children are religious and loyal to our Torah and to its way of life....

The statement of the religious members of the Jewish Agency in which they accuse the Agency of many wrongs perpetrated in the immigrant camps is well-known. Representatives of the Religious Bloc, led by Minister of the Interior Moshe Shapiro, have continually requested and demanded the right of religious education and have stressed that they will not allow discrimination against Torah education. All religious ministers and members of the Jewish Agency have threatened to resign unless these conditions improve.

Every Jew who possesses a spark of faith shuddered when reading the text of the telegram of January 23 from the Chief Rabbis of Israel.

"We pray that these shocking machinations will quickly pass, the removal of the children of religious Jews, -- 'believers, sons of believers', born of generations of G-d fearing Jews -- to irreligious and even anti-religious education. The rabbis of Yemen attested in our presence in the religious courts that in the camps the children are kept from education in Torah and G-d's commandments. You must strive to raise large sums of money to establish sheltering places for the children of the diaspora."

Chief Rabbis Herzog and Uziel of Israel The Union of Orthodox Rabbis in America has also received many similar telegrams from the Chief Rabbis of Israel and from great religious leaders and

sages concerning the discrimination against religious education in the immigrant camps of Israel. David Pinkas, chairman of the Finance Committee of the Knesset and chairman of the Religious Bloc in Israel, sent the following telegram:

"Congratulations on your work and your words of encouragement to stand with us in our difficult struggle to save the souls of the children of Israel. We are taking all possible steps to eliminate the system of oppression in the immigrant camps and in the new settlements. The case is being considered by the Government. Upon your demands depends the character of the young generation of immigrants, almost all of whom are religious, especially the immigrants from Yemen who are all observers of Torah and G-d's commandments."

--David Zvi Pinkas

We believe that the telegrams present a clear refutation of Lurie's statement and prove that the accusations and demands are highly justified. These accusations can also be substantiated by the news items printed in the general Zionist newspapers, such as *Haaretz* and *Haboker*.

Lurie claims that one-third of the population in the camps receives religious education. But he himself admits that two-thirds are being brought up in a nonreligious fashion. According to his own words, then, the accusations have a very strong foundation, and they are no longer a figment of the imagination.

Lurie, as head of the Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency, is surely acquainted with the public

statements made by his colleague in the Agency, Mr. Kol, head of Youth Aliyah, who said that "all immigrants from the Eastern countries are religious and for them there does not exist the problem of being religious or not. They are one-hundred percent religious." In view of this, how can Lurie justify the direct alienation of the two-thirds from religion, and how can he answer for the position held by the Education Department of the Youth Aliyah that the children are usually asked which education they wish?

We have before us the protocol of Teveth 21 of a meeting of the Religious Bloc in Israel in which they state, "It is shameful to reveal, but let us not fool ourselves. We are being faced with a decree of religious persecution in the fullest meaning of the words."

The Jewish Agency has made it a policy to give money only for the upkeep of the children, but not for their housing. We are not yet sure of the true intentions of this policy. This has caused a great number of religious immigrant children to end up in colonies and homes which are anti-religious.

When Youth Aliyah provides homes for these immigrant children, they usually send them to the parties who have the necessary funds to erect homes. The Histadrut, which has the opportunity and is encouraged to raise tens of millions of dollars, has enough homes, whereas the religious parties, which are not permitted to raise their own funds and receive a negligibly small budget from the UJA for all their necessary activities, including colonization, schools, etc., do not have enough homes.

With the excuse of insufficient homes operated by

the religious, thousands upon thousands of children are being handed over to the leftist parties to receive an anti-religious upbringing. We state clearly and unequivocally that every American Jew realizes that the excuses offered for this condition, namely lack of money and housing, cannot and dare not rob each child who comes from a religious home of his basic right to a religious home in Israel.

We, therefore, reiterate that only by giving each child maintenance plus a home from the funds of Youth Aliyah will it be possible once and for all to eliminate the religious discrimination. We shall thus solve a historic problem for the future of the people of Israel.

Report of the Investigation Committee on Educational Matters in the Immigrant Camps

Following sharp world-wide protests and religious party pressure, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion appointed an Investigative Committee on Educational Matters in the Immigration Camps on January 17, 1950 to ascertain the facts in reference to the religious oppression of the immigrants to Israel. The committee was chaired by Gad Fromkin, with Yisroel Yeshayahu as its secretary and Avraham Elmaliach, Yitzchok Ben-Zvi (later president of Israel), Rabbi Kalman Kahane and Rabbi Avraham Chaim Shaag as the other members. The Committee issued its findings, which are excerpted below on May 9, 1950.

Appointment and Modus Operandi

It is hard to decide in a chronological and exact manner, and it is even of no material importance, how, when and from where the first complaints of disturbances in matters of religion and

education in the immigration camps came. It is known that already in the summer of 1949 parents asked that religious teachers be sent or religious classes be maintained in the camps. These requests were sent to the Department of Language and Cultural Absorption of the Immigrants -- which is also referred to as the Department of Culture -- which not only is in charge of language and cultural matters for adults, but also for the education of the children in the camps. This demand became greater with the great influx of Yemenite Jewry as did the complaints and accusations in matters of religion and education. Then people began to come to the camps to teach Torah among the immigrants and their children without permission of those responsible for managing the camps. They were not greeted nicely; no encouragement or help was given them -- on the contrary, the camp managers complained of serious disturbances to the point where police were called in. Rabbis and personalities from religious circles in the state began to visit the camps to investigate the facts and brought their complaints before the Prime Minister, Minister of Education and Culture and high-ranking officials responsible for matters in the camps. Newspaper articles began to appear and the matter was even brought up at the Conference of Education and Culture of the first Knesset. The matter reached its peak at the session of the committee on December 28, 1949 when David Pinkas expressed himself very sharply regarding the situation and announced that this could cause a serious schism in the government and country if this is not resolved early. His main demand was to transfer immediately matters of education in the camps from the Department of Language and Culture to the branch of education in the office of Education and Culture. Two weeks later, on January 10, 1950 the question was discussed at a session of the government in which the Minister of Religion summarized his accusations that "they are forcing the children in the camps to go against their religion." The next

day much publicity was given in the local papers to the events of this session, and to the threat to secede by the ministers of the religious parties. In the edition of January 13 of the *Jewish Chronicle* in London, disturbing details of the matter were published. The next day they informed the government, in a detailed telegram from London, that the United Jewish Appeal was ready to take action. A telegram was sent to the government from New York on January 16, including signatures from the groups parallel to the religious front in Israel, in which they announced an urgent gathering at which they decided to ask the government to "investigate again the problem of absorption of the children, in order to prevent any injustice to the children and their parents and to the Jewish religion and also in order to avert a world-wide scandal..."

At the government's session of January 17, 1950 a committee was appointed in matters of education in the camps with these duties:

1. To investigate complaints of religious coercion in the camps.
2. To ascertain the truth of the complaints in the papers and who is responsible for them.
3. To investigate the sources of propaganda abroad in connection with these accusations.

Direction of the Committee's Investigation

From the start, the Committee saw its aims as two-fold: First, to prove the complaints of religious coercion in the camps; second, to check the truthfulness of the newspaper articles and to discern who is responsible for them and also the sources of the propaganda abroad regarding these complaints.

The Committee worked at reaching these two goals simultaneously. Even in regard to the first duty, they worked on

two directions: delving into general background and investigating concrete facts.

Some of the complaints: They forced immigrants to enter schools of the Histiadrut; they forced them to go against their religion; they forced them not to put on tefillin; they forced them to cut off their sidelocks. A rabbi who visited the camps after much effort was told to remove his yarmulke.

Minister of Education Zalman Shazar¹ testified:

"These things were said before a high ranking source and they are very clearly set down. We have generalities here: 'religious coercion' - this is a general idea. But matters have become more concrete: 'They are forced not to put on tefillin (phylacteries), they are forced to cut off their sidelocks.' This is important to investigate. There were also complaints of the parents against the teachers that they asked for religious education and did not receive it."

The minister said that he himself had gone to investigate. He did not reach all the camps, but sent people from his department to visit other places and gave over the results of his investigation. "In the place where they claimed they cut off sidelocks (Beit Lid), no one was found who made this accusation.... There were complaints that there were instances of this, but it was done only on doctor's orders in order to prevent spread of infections of the skin and hair - where for hygiene reasons one couldn't consider religious reasons. If the sidelocks weren't cut off, the infection couldn't be checked." In this place he also saw "seven girls whose braids were cut off and they cried bitterly. The number of children whose hair was removed for this reason until now was twelve. This was the basis for the political accusation of removal of sidelocks. Perhaps you will clear up the matter further; this is the conclusion I came to. In regard to prohibiting putting on phylacteries, I saw no case of this anywhere."

¹ Shazar was paid off later on for his magnificent job in helping annihilating Yememite Jewry spiritually by being installed as President of the Zionist state. This is the man that

The minister continued: "I was in the same camp in Beit Lid and I spoke to the Yemenite teacher who told me there are 30 synagogue tents in the camp. In all these places it is possible for any teacher or *mori* to teach."

In his testimony, the Minister of Education elaborated on "the second factor which made an investigation necessary - that together with the outbreak of this matter, a large, organized and well-branched protest movement arose abroad."

After quoting telegrams received from London and America, he said: "I think that such a large protest movement against the Israeli government and the educational system in the camps was not spontaneous. Since the establishment of the state this is the first action, the first organized protest among world Jewry against the government of Israel. One who understands these things and the mood in America knows the meaning of such a 'meeting' when we used to make such meetings against Hitler, against laws opposed to immigration to Israel, against Bevin. This is the first time that such an action is taken against the state of Israel in such an organized and vehement manner. There is something different to this. At any rate, we are not used to this. Even if we shall say that there were bad occurrences and something must change; even if there are things to be rectified in the camps, we are not accustomed to and cannot imagine that there is a need for such action and that the influence must come by uniting forces against the Israeli government from outside of its borders."

"When we became aware of this fact...we asked firstly: how did this evolve and is this the way of cooperative influence? The matter needs investigating and it is your job to see how this whole movement came about, even if all the complaints are truthful and should be listened to; it is the job of the government and the Knesset, between ourselves. The matter doesn't have to be taken abroad and be brought to our attention from abroad.

was hugged and kissed by Lubavitch. Lubavitch, that twenty years prior condemned the genocide of the Teheran children in the sharpest of terms.

This matter interests the government. The government cannot investigate these things; this must be done by a special government committee. The question is if it is necessary to use these means, or unnecessary, and to whom and against whom can we say these things."

"I would like to show you the changes in these statements in different places and different occasions. When Pinkas advised in November for the first time that we look into the matter of education in the camps, he argued at the Conference of Education that the counselors doing the work are not qualified and don't know how to manage these activities; they have no free time and it has become clear that many children are not getting an education. Therefore, he said, we must hasten this. At that time, nothing was said of religious coercion, cutting off sidelocks or going against religious principles. This was in November. Only that children were not receiving a regular education was mentioned, and that this must be transferred to the branch for education. In December when the matter was more imminent and they had to organize a large movement to organize the mood in the matter of education in the camps, Pinkas came to the Conference on Education and his complaints were: inquisition, genocide, religious coercion, spiritual concern, and more than this: destruction of a nation's culture. He said that these spiritual counselors are destroying the religious culture in the camps. He said these things after the international instructions for saving the national culture were given and as a result of this."

"I see the principle importance of the committee in that it will put an end to these things. If everyone will turn to Jewish communities abroad, it will be a step back to the era of the National Committee in the worst way. A state cannot tolerate this. I see the political side to this in that we can debate between

ourselves, but we cannot have outsiders intervening - especially in the area of religion."

The Minister of Welfare, Rabbi I. M. Levin,¹ added to his friend's words in testimony before the Committee:

"I returned to the country a few weeks ago. Abroad, I attended public meetings, and I noted our achievements. I explained abroad that there is no religious coercion and the fact that we are participating in the government is also an achievement. I did, in fact, hear the beginnings of rumors in the camps but I did not wish to heed them because I was occupied with explaining to American Jewry that the Israeli government is doing more for religion than in any other place. I am forced to note that upon my return I was very disappointed. I notified the Prime Minister of my disappointment. It is understood that I cannot take responsibility for all the things, for I was not here. But, from all that I have heard, I must conclude that there is something to the rumors, and that there were in the camps scares and threats.

"People spoke to me about the matter of sidelocks, etc. The sidelocks are not what matter. One can be a religious Jew without sidelocks, and a nonreligious Jew with sidelocks. But when Mr. Shazar said that they are not doing this to the men, that it happened only once, etc. I saw in this some deception. I saw many children whose hair had been cut, their sidelocks were shaved off and their bangs were left. Rabbi Kahaneman of Zichron Meir says that he heard children in his institution, when they say Grace after meals say: May he who is Merciful revenge us, May He who is Merciful punish Tzipporah. He thought this was a Yemenite custom, because the children were of Yemenite immigrants. But it became clear that Tzipporah was a helper who cut off their sidelocks. There is no covering up the matter, and one can't say it was done for medical reasons."

From the testimony of Nahum Levin:

¹ This renegade to Orthodox Judaism, can even say that he told everyone while in the U. S. A. that the new Zionist state is the best place for a Jew to be religious. One need

"I want to state here clearly: the activity is anti-Zionist, for it is speaking against a free state. I will recount here one thing that shook me up: the teacher Gitita Landau, who teaches a religious class in Be'er Yaakov (which was opened secretly and even so I said: for the sake of peace I will leave this class and I accepted her) was the representative of the state in Be'er Yaakov. When a youth club opened there and her students were invited to participate, she said: 'My children are not participating in a club.' This was in connection with bringing Herzl's remains to Israel, and they wanted it to be a joint effort. She said: 'The entire matter of bringing Herzl's remains to Israel is idolatrous.'

"This problem is unique. I was familiar before with this tribe, but because of my work I have become even closer. This is a very noble, perhaps the most noble, of all tribes in Israel. The Yemenite tribe is very primitive. This primitiveness I have never seen anywhere else. And I am saying in the clearest manner: You will have no way, we will have no way and the state will have no way but to make a bridge between them and the state. There is no other way open to us.

"The question is: what is the bridge we can use for the Yemenite to come to us and us to them. From first-hand understanding of the matter, I say the bridge is the state. One cannot ignore the fact that we are all strange to them. A yeshiva student in Bnei Brak is just as strange to them as any other Jew. Believe me, my friends, my words are truth."

Complaints and Charges

As a transition from general accusations to specific ones, we shall begin with accusations that are connected to specific facts and yet are also of general value.

I. Teachers and Counselors Who Are Irreligious.

There is much complaining that the majority of teachers, only read what the Yemenite rabbis had to say about this in their dirges, which can be found later on in this book.

counselors and general workers in the camps are not religious. The argument is that not only is it impossible for irreligious teachers to give a religious education, but that the fact that the management is also irreligious affects the way of life of the immigrants. We are speaking of children and youth and primitive people who, in their places of exile, were used to being subjugated and stepped upon, and since they are dependent on the favors of the management they instinctively try to find favor in their eyes and be like them.

How much truth is there to this accusation?

The Minister of Education remitted that, of 170 teachers and counselors, seventy-seven are religious. He gave the committee a list of religious teachers. Nahum Levin gave the same number of religious people out of 157. These numbers make up 50% of all the teachers in all the camps and are not in proportion to the religious people in the camps, who according to the estimate of the Committee, comprise 70-80% of the population. For example, regarding Beit Lid, testimonies were given that of nine teachers, only one is religious. Testimony was also given that of twenty-eight men and women teachers in Ein Shemer, which has only Yemenite immigrants, only eight were religious. Hadassa Lipshinovitz testified that of twenty-five counselors in youth clubs only two are religious. She explains this difficulty in that they turned to all the youth movements of 'Hapoel Mizrachi' and 'Bnei Akiva' and received no response.

Besides this, there is no exact criteria for measuring the religiousness of a worker; it is a matter of evaluation. Nahum Levin attests that at first they did not ask a candidate about his religiousness. Only after the arguments did they ask everyone orally and, in accordance with his answer, registered him as observant or non-observant. Therefore, one must be cautious when the information is given under politically-colored circumstances. For example, a witness appeared before the Committee who deemed it necessary to appear religious, and

there was a strong basis for the Committee to doubt him.

Aside from this, some of the cultural directors and principals of schools testified that they were not asked at all whether their teachers were religious. One cultural director, when asked to see which of his teachers are religious, claimed that one teacher appearing on the registration as religious was not classified as such by him. There also appears on the register of religious teachers five Yemenite teachers in Beit Lid (who are not named). The Committee found out that these Yemenite teachers did teach in Beit Lid for two or three weeks in Tishrei, but were no longer teaching in Cheshvan. The register was given to the Committee in Shevat.

There is a serious complaint from those involved in education in the camps that there are not enough teachers, especially religious teachers. The suggestion of sending yeshiva students to teach in the camps was pushed aside by Nahum Levin for two reasons:

1) They are not licensed teachers and have no pedagogical experience; 2) If he would accept this kind of teacher, he would have to open the camps to other people and go against his line of unity.

Although Rabbi Baruch Goldberg of Vaad Hayeshivot was not satisfied with this decision, and although he had asked that religious classes be opened upon the request of twenty families and not the usual thirty families, he agreed with this. Mr. Levin said at first the plan should be put into action only after it received approval from the Torah Department under Rabbi Chen. Rabbi Goldberg, who did not want the matter delayed, agreed with Levin to send someone to the camps without waiting for Rabbi Chen's approval; but if the latter would oppose it, they would look into the matter again. Rabbi Goldberg was prepared to leave immediately for the camps to organize the whole thing. Mr. Levin opposed this; it was agreed

that Mr. Lifshitz of the Torah Department would go in his place. In the end, the investigator did not go to the camps and because of reasons which have never been made clear enough, Mr. Lifshitz never went to the camps and, more important, the plan never materialized.

2. Disturbances of Torah Study

In addition to the accusation that religious teachers and counselors were not given enough of a place in the department's plan, the Department of Culture is also blamed for disrupting Torah study. Even in the synagogues, they limited the activity of Yemenite teachers and prohibited religious teachers from the outside to enter the camps. Some of those who came were evicted, and they even shut down synagogues after prayer time so that there would be no Torah study.

What proof is there of this?

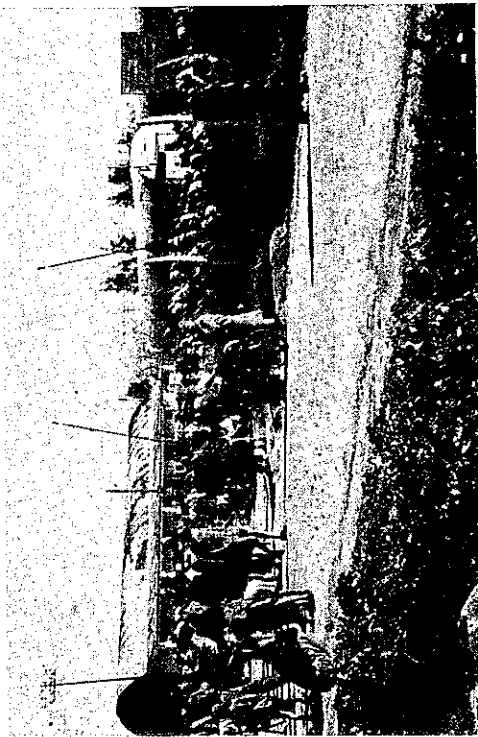
Ein-Shemer

Rabbi Yitzchok Levy, a Yemenite immigrant from the Ein-Shemer camp, who was elderly and dignified, soft-spoken and weighing his words carefully, and respected by the camp management, appeared before the committee with three friends and testified to the veracity of these complaints, that "after three weeks (from the time that Aldama came) the teachers came to me and told me that Aldama is disrupting the studies and says to them: leave, you are not qualified to teach. We complained. Aldama then chose nine of the teachers and told the remaining five to leave."

The nine who remained were also disturbed and they left, so that no Yemenite teachers remained. Rabbi Yosef David Madmon, also a Yemenite, also testified that Aldama said "there is no need for Torah."

There is also the testimony of Yehuda Rider and Moshe

Seigel, teachers in the school at Ein-Shemer, that when Aldama went to the camp he announced at a teachers' meeting that he would not allow the Yemenite teacher to teach Torah and that they should also not teach Torah. One teacher who participated in that meeting, Saadyah Yarimi, whose general testimony seemed sympathetic to the management, said that when they told Aldama that Torah was being taught, he said this should not be done so long as there were no instructions from the department. Regarding the halting of Yemenite instruction in Torah, Yerimi said it was only to separate the Yemenite teachers from the other teachers since 'the Yemenite teachers have no conception of school.' Mr. Aldama, when questioned, told of the difficulties he had with the Yemenite teachers who know no manners and are not qualified to teach, and that he retained nine of the better teachers. He attributed the halt of their instruction for a short time to the necessity of making repairs in the building. His explanation was not convincing.



Immigrant camp of Ein-Shemer. Notice the barracks, fences of barbed wire reminiscent of Nazi concentration camps.

Rabbi Goldberg testified about the disruption of Torah study in that place: "On the 22nd of Cheshvan in the afternoon, the director of the camp (Trachtenberg) entered the synagogue and ordered all the teachers to stop the studies and leave the place. They refused. He then sent messengers to remove them forcibly. I gave an order to continue, and then the director gave the synagogue over for court sessions."

Rabbi Diskin testified about prejudice toward religious schools in Ein-Shemer: "The 'midrashia' (religious elementary school in Pardes Chana) wanted to transfer educational activities on the 15th of Shevat, but met many obstacles since the young people from K'far Vitkin always had free access to there."

The Machane Yisrael Camp

Two teachers, Piltz and Shneersohn, testified that they were sent by the Committee of Yeshivos to Machane Yisrael because of the parents' demand for religious education and began to teach in the synagogue. After they were told that there was no need to teach in the synagogue since there was a religious school, the camp guards came, put Piltz's hands behind him, dragged him to the gate and put him out of the camp. When he attempted to return, they threatened him with a rifle. They also forcibly removed Shneersohn. Rabbi Unterman visited the camp at that time, and according to his testimony before the committee, he spoke to the director, Mr. Bodniv, who promised to take care of the matter. The two teachers continued to teach in the synagogue. The director told them they must get approval from the Department of Teachers. They were approved, but Piltz says in his testimony: "The director of the camp refused to accept me and said that in the camp he decides and no one else. We continued to teach, and then the director came, accompanied by the camp police. They forcibly removed the students and then Shneersohn and myself from the place of study. I publicized the matter in **HaTzofeh** (a daily newspaper).

When I visited Bar-Zamra, a responsible worker in the Department of Culture informed me that teachers are prohibited from engaging in politics and since I publicized the matter I had transgressed this prohibition. Through Rabbi Goldberg's intervention with Nahum Levin, I received permission to renew my teaching; but two days later, the camp guard notified me that I would not be allowed to enter and that if I did he would not be responsible for the outcome, even murder."

Yitzchok Schneersohn said that, after receiving his authorization as a teacher, they moved him to the immigrant camp in Pardessia. There, he said, "There is no disputing that the children are religious, but the counselors, aside from myself, are not religious. I feel as if I am a *mezuzza*, a stamp of approval (certificate of sanction)."

In their testimony, Rabbis Fuchs and Dermer confirmed the fact that they invited the two religious teachers, Piltz and Schneersohn, after they and 100 religious families decided to open a religious school in the camp. The teachers began to teach in the synagogue until the director, Joseph Bodniv, ordered it closed. Holy books and textbooks were thrown outside, and locks were put on the doors to prevent study there. It was opened only at prayer time. There were those who came to pray and were unable to do so because the synagogue was locked. Rabbi Dermer asked, "What law recognizes the director's order which denies religious Jews the right to educate their children as they wish? When I was in Romania, a communist country, I was able in my district to support three yeshivos and one school for girls, and every religious Jew had the opportunity to educate his children in accordance with his wishes. Here, in our own country, the religious Jew is deprived in a dictatorial manner of the right to educate his children as he pleases."

Bodniv, the director of the camp, verified in his testimony

the prevention of study in the synagogue. This, he says, he did on orders as was the custom, and that the synagogue was closed except for times of prayer: but he was not aware that it was found locked at prayer times. He denied that textbooks and holy books were taken from the synagogue.

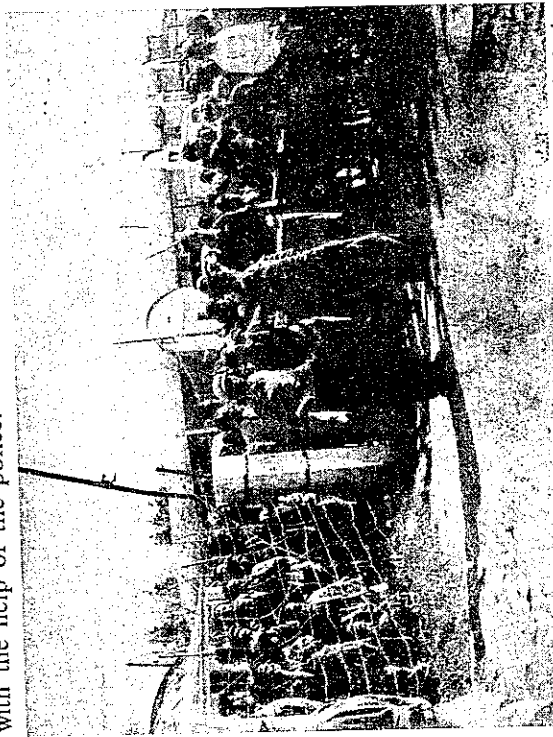
Atlit

In this camp, the director informed the teachers who were teaching in the two synagogues that they could not continue studies without special permission of the Department of Culture. Rabbi Goldberg said in his testimony: "Meanwhile, the teachers from the Department of Culture took over one synagogue for Hebrew lessons. We had to make do with one synagogue. On the 22nd of Cheshvan (November 14, 1949), the camp director of Atlit, with several officials and a policeman, entered the synagogue and ordered the teachers to leave immediately and come to his office. There they were detained for two hours. The teachers asked to be freed, but the director told them they must remain in the office until police from Zichron Yaakov took them away for questioning. On the 24th of Cheshvan (November 16, 1949), I went to the director and asked the reason for the eviction of the teachers. He answered that he was suspicious that the teachers had taken some children out of the camp and put them in yeshivos."

Be'er Yaakov

When the Commission visited Be'er Yaakov, the people who had something to say were singled out; however, they refrained from speaking in front of the camp personnel. A number of them were invited to testify before the Commission in Jerusalem, and one individual, a majestic-looking Tunisian rabbi, related: "One day some people approached me, saying, 'Come, they want to close the synagogue.' That day there was to be a **bris milah** (circumcision). The **mohel** is my son-in-law. I

went and found Mordechai Unger, a carpenter, with a lock in his hand. He is a colleague of mine in the study of the Talmud. He said to me, 'I received instructions to close the synagogue in Camp Gimel (three).' After a conversation between us, he was ashamed and did not close the synagogue. He left and after ten minutes, he returned and said, 'I asked the director. He told me that it is because there is a school in Camp No. 1.' I asked Unger what he intended to do. He replied, 'I don't know if I'm in Germany or Russia.' The next day the teachers came as usual to the synagogue, but they found no benches there. They were told that the director took them. After that, the benches were returned for the Sabbath. After Sabbath, the two teachers resumed their teaching in the synagogue. When we came to pray in the evening, I found the teachers sitting as though in mourning. They said, 'The director and Dr. Ross interrupted our teaching, chased away the children and took the benches with the help of the police.'"



Immigrant camp of Ein-Shermer. Notice the barracks, fences of barbed wire

His friend, a rabbi from Morocco, filled in his words: "I worked hard to open a synagogue. At first we prayed outdoors." When asked why he was cautious not to speak in the camp, he said, "I thought perhaps they would do something to us."

Dr. Ross in his testimony acknowledges the fact and explains the need for this. Permission was granted that a synagogue be opened in Camp Gimel only on the condition that there would be no Torah study, since there is a religious class in the synagogue in the adjacent camp - Beth (two). The teachers were warned to stop teaching and it is a matter of discipline not to teach without permission, although the teacher in the synagogue in Camp Beth is an Ashkenazi, whereas these teachers are from Tripoli, as are the students.

The explanation speaks for itself.

Immigrant Homes: Achuza, Kiryat Shmuel, Kiryat Motzken and Moshav Amka

Rabbi Winkelstein tells in his testimony of his tribulations in these places. He came to Israel in January, 1949 from Poland via France and brought with him twenty-four orphans that he saved from Christians.

As if to explain his persistence in the face of the difficulties he encountered, he says: "I have no family; I have no home; my wife is in jail." Here are some paragraphs from his testimony:

Achuza: "In accordance with the demands of the religious parents, we brought a teacher. On the first day of lessons, the camp director attacked him and he was compelled to stop the class. The parents persisted in their demand for religious teachers so we brought two teachers from Haifa, and we gathered the signatures of fifty parents to send to Nahum Levin in Tel Aviv. The director chased them out, so they taught out-of-doors until it rained. They then went back into the

synagogue, whereupon the assistant director threatened to call the police if they would not stop their instruction. I told the director I had fifty signatures. He asked for the list in order to examine it. That same evening he assembled the fifty parents who had signed and threatened them with suspension from the camp if the study of the Torah were continued. All this happened at a time when no other school existed."

Kiryat Shmuel: "When the management found out that the children are studying Torah in the synagogue, they called the teacher and expressed their vehement opposition to this. They threatened to close the synagogue should instruction be continued there. They also threatened the teachers with expulsion should they continue to teach Torah."

Kiryat Motzkin: "On one occasion, the secretary of the camp announced that learning Torah is prohibited in the camp. A few days later, the secretary appeared with a teacher from the Department of Education and a policeman and made a scene during studies. They began to chase the children out of the room, and when the parents came to protest they were all chased away."

Amka: This is what Rav Winkelstein tells of Amka. "I visited Amka which is adjacent to Nahariya. There, sixty-four parents signed, and we received authorization from the Agudath Israel to open a school. We brought a teacher from Haifa, but the director did not permit him to teach. We thought this was a mistake, so I brought three teachers a few days later. The next day, Director Lukov announced that he would not allow studies. I asked for an explanation, after telling him that we had authorization from the government, and the Yemenites requested this. I pleaded with him, and he told me that if I did not stop, I would end up like De Haan. He said this in the presence of witnesses. I spoke to him quietly, but all my pleas for his aid were to no avail."

I. De Haan was an Orthodox Jewish jurist who was assassinated by the Haganah in June 1924.

"The next day, when the Yemenites sent their children to the synagogue, Director Yosef Lukov and the secretary barged in and forcibly chased the children out. I was present in the study hall at that time and could not believe my eyes. They behaved arrogantly. I asked them to stop, but in reply they tried to push me down. The Yemenites were very angry. They brought the children into the synagogue and again began to teach."

Rabbi Winkelstein further relates, "I began to study Torah with about thirty Yemenites. Within an hour shots were heard outside, and an armed Ashkenazi Jew, Mr. Roswein, burst into the synagogue, shouting that the Arabs had attacked. He ordered that the lights be put out and that we get down on the floor." Rabbi Winkelstein, feeling that something was odd, walked outside and saw to his astonishment that the lights were on throughout the camp and that there was no sign of an Arab attack. He then approached the camp watchman, who told him that the so-called Arab 'attack' was a fabrication designed solely to frighten the Yemenites away from the study of the Torah.

"The road leading to Amka was impassable except with a tractor. The director of the camp gave an order that any person who appeared to be religious was not allowed to use the tractor and was even prohibited walking on this road. The teachers were forced to take a dangerous roundabout road past Arab villages. Even now, this path is barred for these people."

In actions such as these, the directors of the camps and cultural centers in the camps based their stand on an order given in this matter from the Director of the Department of Absorption of the Jewish Agency. The Committee was given a notice sent on December 9, 1949 to the management of all immigrant camps in the country.

"In order to prevent misunderstandings, we must

announce that people who don't have permits from the Office of Education and Culture of the State of Israel cannot engage in educational activities with children or adults in the immigrant camps.

"--Dr. G. Jusfetel"

According to the testimony of the Minister of Education, Mr. Shazar, there was a need for this announcement, after the representatives of the Orthodox yeshivos began to appear in the camps. They needed a formal statement from Jusfetel since the camps are under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, and they are indirectly interested in it for financial reasons, as Mr. Shazar explained.

Let the reason for prohibiting Torah study without permission be whatever it is, in several camps they were very grim about enforcing the command to the point of force, and even in prohibiting Torah study by religious teachers who lived in the camps, and for teachers who had permission to teach. For this there is no excuse.

3. Discrimination Toward Religious People in Regard to Entering the Camps

In addition to the facts described in regard to the incident in Ein-Shemer, where visitors to the camp encountered difficulty when they were already in the camp, the committee heard complaints from a number of witnesses who testified that entry into the camps was made difficult for people whose appearance pointed to the fact that they were religious. Rabbi Goldberg testified that in the beginning of his visits to the camps he encountered no difficulty; but as time went on, it became difficult to enter since he had a beard and sidelocks.

He told of a specific incident that happened to him on January 19, 1950 in Rosh HaAyin. According to him, his bag was searched and they did not want to allow him to enter. There were other visitors without beards; among them a yeshiva

student who came with him and was allowed in with no difficulty.

One of the absorption workers of the Jewish Agency who has a beard, told of three times when he was not allowed into the camp. He had not arrived in the car which brought the rest of the workers but had gone there later by himself. The witness added that although the third time he was told he was being barred entry because the camp was closed, he saw many people with no job at all in the camps entering with no questions asked about their reasons for being there.

Likewise, Reb Tzadok Yitzhari testified before the Committee that he had come to Israel from Yemen the year before and was in charge of organizing the immigrants in the camps into settlements for Mizrahi. The witness, whose family was still in the camp, testified that he encountered great difficulty in entering the camp even to visit his family. He also told of instances where other people with beards were not allowed to enter the camps.

4. Sanctions Against Religious Teachers

The day after Mr. Aldama came to Ein Shemer, he assembled the teachers and informed them that he would not allow them to continue with their instruction in the Torah. He added that they would teach only Hebrew, math and Zionism. To those who argued with this, he said: "Anyone who doesn't agree to these conditions can leave the camp." Two teachers present at this meeting, Rider and Seigel, publicized this in **HaTzofeh**; after that Moshe Seigel was stopped from working. According to his testimony, he was not told explicitly, but mainly they spoke of the publicity in the paper and said that his work was being stopped indefinitely. According to the testimony of the second party who signed the letter in **HaTzofeh**, Yehuda Rider, Aldama came to him and told him that after the matter of the letter in **HaTzofeh** he could not continue to be

responsible for the school in Camp Bet. He said he was not firing him only because they were friends. After a while Mr. Aldama offered him responsible work in the camp with the condition that he give him reparation for the letter in the paper.

The explanation in regard to the primitive measures against these two teachers was that it was not done because they were religious, but because teachers should not become involved in politics and publicize things in papers.

It is very eye-opening to see the attitude toward religious teachers in the same camp, Ein-Shemer. Five girls, students of the graduating class of **Bais Yaakov Seminary** in Jerusalem, responded to the call for teachers in the camps. According to the testimony of three of them before the investigating committee, they were invited to teach by Yehuda Rider at Aldama's demand. When they arrived at Ein-Shemer, they were told teachers can only be accepted through the Department of Culture. They returned to Tel Aviv and were approved, three of them to Ein-Shemer, and two to Rosh HoAyin. Here is a paragraph from their testimony:

"We were placed in a room where the sports counselor, a member of **Mapam**, lived. The first night, her boyfriends came in a very disruptive and mocking manner to test us to see if we would react. Later, I found on my notebook: 'Shoshana, I have my eye on you, you will yet hear from me.' After a few days, I found in our room two additional beds which had been put there by the counselor as if for the workers of the electric company. When we told Aldama, he laughed and ordered the beds taken out, and said the counselor did this to tease us. Our parents came to visit us. They complained to Aldama, and we were promised our own room. On February 14 at 12:00 P.M., the counselors burst into our room as we slept. They woke us and began to dance in our room until 1:00 A.M. The next day Rabbi Goldberg came. We told him what happened. He went to

Aldama, who promised that by February 21 there would be a separate room. Meanwhile, the situation became worse. For example, this week some boys sat on our beds, and one refused to get off. On March 10 we handed in our resignations. When we suggested to Aldama to bring other friends in our place, he said this is up to Tel Aviv. But on that very day, some friends, of Benjomina's roommate came and were accepted immediately. When we were leaving, they moved our friends into a room which had been empty the entire time.

"Out of thirty men and women teachers in Ein-Shemer, only eight are religious. The teachers travel on the Sabbath, light and extinguish candles on the Sabbath. The children told me that one counselor asked, 'Where is G-d?'"

5. Sanctions Against Children Who Learn Torah and Their Parents

In Der-Yasin (Givat Shaul Bet) they stopped serving lunches to the children in the class of the religious teacher, Blass, who was sent there by the Committee of Yeshivos. There was also an attempt to take the teacher out of the camp by police force. After Rabbi Goldberg's intervention, the children again received lunches. The stopping of lunches was rationalized because a law of mandatory education was passed, and it is impossible to serve lunches to children who are breaking the law. When they said that the children are learning in a religious class, they answered, "This is not called school."

From documents presented to the Committee, it was said that in Be'er Yaakov they distributed clothing to the children, but the children in the religious class were not given any. One mother, who had two daughters -- one in a religious class and one in the general school -- asked for clothing for her daughter in the religious class and was refused.

The head of the Committee, upon traveling to Rosh HoAyin, met up with a group of six children around the ages of

10-14, some of them barefoot or with ill-fitting shoes. They complained: "We are learning Torah so we don't get clothes or shoes. Children who learn in school do get them." And, indeed, upon visiting the school, he saw a small group of boys preparing a presentation putting on shoes which were their size. During this tour, one religious teacher complained that in the tents where they learned Torah there were no stools, when at the same time in the school there are stools.

The Commission heard considerable testimony which brought to light the fact that the mandatory freedom of self-determination, which is in principle guaranteed by the existence of educational divisions in accordance with ideologies, was neither observed in fact in the immigrant settlements and centers, nor upon their leaving the camps. Funds distributed to the forsaken areas were not allocated for religious schools, in spite of the fact that the establishment of such schools was authorized by the Office of Education. Similarly, where the religious school in a particular settlement was granted housing, it turned out to be in an unsuitable place. According to the witnesses, this was done in order that a religious school should not become entrenched, and meanwhile, the directors would have sufficient opportunity to register the children in a Labor school.

The inequity begins with the refusal to allow people who appear to be religious to enter the camps. This fact was attested to before the Committee by the Rabbis Nachum Friedman (rabbi in the synagogue in Machane Yehuda), Isaac Weingarten (a lecturer in the Yeshiva "Chayei Olam") and Israel Grossman (Dean of Yeshiva "Karlin"). According to their statement, they went to Mei Neftoah (Liftah) on January 19 in order to encourage the Yemenites in religious matters. On the road, a woman by the name of Miriam met them and presented herself as a counselor from the Agency. She attempted to keep them

from approaching the village by taunting them. She also called the director of the camp, Shalom Amar, who participated in these taunts and even pushed the rabbis. Finally, Joseph Shamash, one of the members of the local commission -- a Yemenite who had been living in Israel for several years -- arrived. The woman shouted, "Uprooters of Israel", while Shamash threw stones at these rabbis who say their lives were thus endangered. In this way, their entrance into the village was prevented.

Rabbi Porush communicated another fact with reference to Ein-Kerem. During the period when children were being registered in schools, one of the parents registered his children in the Agudath Israel school. After a while, he returned to the registration room, voided this registration, and registered his children in the Labor school. In answer to the question why he changed his mind, he announced that he was told outside that he would not receive employment if his children attended the Agudath Israel school.

Dr. B. Ben Yehuda told the Committee: "In K'far Gilboa, the parents demanded that a Mizrahi school be established, and we opened a school of this kind. Subsequently, we were informed about severe conflicts there. They said that the Organization of Settlements does not agree to the establishment of a Mizrahi school in a settlement affiliated with it. On one occasion, I was told, force was used."

Dr. Yeshayahu Lebovitz testified that the director of Liftah, Shalom Amar (a representative of the Histadrut who was officially appointed by the Jewish Agency), threatened the parents very explicitly, saying that if they would ask for religious classes they would be punished with restrictions of food, clothing and work.

On July 8, 1950, HaTzofeh published a letter which was typical of those sent to parents who registered their children in religious schools.

General Histadrut of the Jewish workers in Eretz Israel,

Labor Council in Nes-Ziona.

To Mr....in Nes Ziona.

Dear Member:

We learned that you registered your child with the Agudath Israel (Mizrachi) school.

We assume that you did that due to an error and you are asked, therefore, to demand immediately from the registration clerk of the city council to have your child transferred to the workmen's school.

If you will not do so right away, your membership in the Histadrut will be considered void.

Signature:

A. Talin

This is obviously a form letter, not a letter written in a specific instance.

7. Lack of Attention Paid to Prayer

a. Lack of Places for Prayer in the Camps

There are many complaints that the camps have insufficient places for prayer. According to the testimony of Rabbi Goldberg, there is no synagogue in Rosh HoAyin. There are close to 15,000 people there and not even one synagogue. The residents of the camp pray in tents which they have obtained. In the tents there are no benches or comfortable places to study.

And of Ein Shemer one witness, Sh. Kroll said: "In Machane Gimel (Camp Three) there are thousands of Yemenites and no synagogue; I know this for sure. In Machane Aleph (Camp One) and Bet (Two), there are not as many as are needed."

And of Be'er Yaakov, Rabbi Chafita testified: "In Machane Gimel there was no synagogue. We have only one for Ashkenazim."

At the time of their tour of Beit-Lid, in Machanot Aleph and Bet, members of the Committee saw the special synagogue for Ashkenazim which consisted of a room with a tent as an entrance, and were told that the room and the entrance are full to capacity on Sabbaths. The Jews from Tripoli have no place to pray and must pray in the field. They were not permitted to pray in the culture hall, even on Rosh HaShonah.

b. The Impossibility of Prayers before Study and the Disruption of Prayer

Rabbi Yitzchok Yitzchak, who was mentioned before, said in his testimony: "Every day Aldama takes his radio outside during prayer time. He took his radio out also during the first two Sabbaths of his stay in the camp. Now, he does not take it out on Sabbath. But by taking his radio out during prayers — and he has a loudspeaker around his house — it disturbs the prayers."

Minister Levin, in his testimony, told that the Yemenites added a new "HaRachamon" (may the All Merciful...) in the Grace After Meals:—"May the All Merciful punish Tzipporah." The Committee arrived at the source of this new addition. Saadya Sharaby, who was a student at the youth camp in Beit Lid under the supervision of Tzipporah Zahavi, said: "Once we were praying, and the children were singing in the lunchroom. I told Tzipporah this was disturbing. She said: 'Prayer is not necessary in Eretz Yisrael.' Tzipporah would bother us during the Grace After Meals. After that we would say 'May the All Merciful rid us of Tzipporah.'" He added: "During prayer they wouldn't let us pray. The counselor would whistle and say 'Now it's time for calisthenics.' They did not arrange prayers for the morning, and even in the afternoon for mincha they disturbed us."

8. Modesty and Ethics

Many are the complaints regarding this matter of modesty

and ethics, and it is understood that it must be observed from a relative point of view when paying attention to the ways and customs of Oriental immigrants, especially the Yemenites. Their modesty will seem extreme to the natives of Israel. But one cannot ignore the fact that they are very careful not to put men and women under one roof unless they are family members, or to expose parts of the body such as arms, legs, knees and the like.

Rabbi Yitzchok Yitzchok Levi testified: "Aldama said that there was a need for a youth camp. We asked, 'What is a youth camp?' He said, 'It is for children from the ages of 14 to 18.' We said, 'It is impossible for the girls and boys to be together. When a boy is studying, the evil inclination will stand before him, and he will not be able to learn.' He said they would arrange for the boys and girls separately. He assembled the entire camp and made a speech about a youth camp. He said they would pray in the morning and then go to eat. They would learn Torah for two hours, and then go to work in the fields. After they ate again, they would learn Hebrew and math for two hours and other sciences to become strengthened. They would pray the afternoon and evening prayer, go to eat and in the evening come to learn songs. They accepted this. They put the children in a youth camp and said there was no room for the boys and girls separately until they build. They began to learn in one room with the boys on one side, and the girls on the other. The parents went to court and shouted: 'We didn't accept this, that our children would be morally ruined. Also the rest of what had been agreed upon was not kept, not Torah or prayer.' Many parents took their children out of the youth camp. Only the orphans remained."

Of the dancing in the camps, the representatives of the Central Mizrachi testified: "Dances of boys and girls, which are the best of Israeli dances of the youth, are considered immoral

by them." The representative of Agudath Israel testified: "We have received information that in the camps the youth are dancing Israeli dances which are immoral in the eyes of the Yemenite immigrants."

It became clear that the complaints were twofold:

- 1) that young people are invited from surrounding places to dance folk dances which arouse the evil inclination of the Oriental people, and
- 2) that they bring Yemenite youth to mixed dances with boys and girls.

Tzipporah Zahavi, who was responsible for the youth camp in Beit Lid, agreed that in the evening there was mixed dancing in the youth camp that she supervised and she saw nothing wrong with it. Yaakov Trachtenberg, the director of Ein-Shemer Aleph, also does not find any wrong in the dancing staged by the youth from Kfar Vitkin or any other place. An educated Israeli youth testified: "When he comes, he comes as a broadminded youth, and if it is summer he comes in shorts. The songs are Israeli work songs, the songs of bravery; the same with the dances -- these are folk dances. If the Hora is immoral, then let it be immoral. I know that thanks to the L-rd I am in the state of Israel. I still remember when I was in the work force: more than once there was no food, there was malaria and the only encouragement was the Hora."

Here is what Rabbi-Yitzchok Yitzchok Levi, head of the rabbinical court in Ein-Shemer had to say: "There is another matter which they call the cinema. At first they said, 'We want to show the public how to fight.' We were happy. After a month and a half, Aldama brought a movie in which men and women embraced. Those that saw the movie at night came to me in the morning and said, 'This we won't accept.' I said I would tell Yaakov (Trachtenberg). He said this is not in his

jurisdiction. We said we would not be quiet at all, so they stopped the cinema."

9. Desecration of the Sabbath

Regarding open desecration of the Sabbath in the camps, there were several details in the documents presented before the Committee and direct testimony was heard in this matter. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that, especially at first, several such incidences caused anger and sorrow to the inhabitants of the camps. Rabbi Goldberg, for example, said that in Atlit they told of teachers who smoked publicly on the Sabbath, and that a large part of the student body stopped praying and began to smoke cigarettes on the Sabbath. Rabbi Unterman quoted from a letter which was given to him with the signatures of several rabbis and immigrants at Ein-Shemer in which is written: "On the past Sabbath irreligious people in Machane Bet hit several people because they protested desecration of the Sabbath. They take the girls and boys to dance and play ball, and to turn out the light."



All the little boys with heads shaven, peyos and tzitzis (fringes on garments).

Rabbi Yitzchok Yitzchok Levi denied what was written in a letter signed by himself and other Yemenites that was given to the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Shazar, and then to the Committee in which is written that they are properly observing the Sabbath. Rabbi Levi said: "This is not correct. On Friday night there is levity and dancing outside." Another witness, Rabbi Yechia Nesanel Alshich, said: "In the camp I have also seen things such as desecration of the Sabbath." And he explains: "On the Sabbath, I do not leave the house so I will not see the desecration of the Sabbath."

In another testimony, it was said that "a month after Aldama came to the camp, a radio and loudspeaker were brought there and were used on Sabbath, too. When Bar-Zimra visited the next day and the teacher complained to him about it, they stopped playing it."

Several witnesses told of a trip on the Sabbath arranged by the counselor, Yefet Chashai, for the students of the youth camp in Beit Lid. They took them to an orchard, where they gathered oranges. Rabbi Sharabi testified: "The children went for a walk on the Sabbath. They came back with oranges in their hands. I told them that this is not allowed. They said, 'The teacher told us that we are permitted to pick.'"

Shaul Sharabi, who participated in the walk, testified: "There was a walk on the Sabbath and when we got to the Sabbath boundary, I said, 'We are not allowed to go any further.' The counselor Yefet said to us: 'There is no Sabbath in Eretz Yisroel.' We proceeded to the orchard. He told the children: 'Pick oranges.' The children didn't want to. He said to them: 'Why are you afraid?' He picked first, and the children followed suit."

Y. Sklar said: "The son of the Chacham Tzalach told me that the counselors took them to the orchards on purpose, and told them that here in Eretz Yisrael one doesn't have to observe

the Sabbath, only in Yemen. They told them to pick oranges on the Sabbath."

Yefet Chashai, the counselor in question, admitted authorizing the walk. But he said that it is illogical that he would collect oranges at all, especially on the Sabbath, and if there were instances where children picked, they did this on their own.

10. Removal of Sidelocks - (Peyos)

The matter of shaving off sidelocks (peyos) served as a topic for the testimony of many witnesses and material for several documents given to the Committee. The general accusation is that they forced and convinced children and also adults to cut off their sidelocks. There were instances of removal of sidelocks, in spite of the protests of those wearing them. They were told of an "operation sidelocks" declared by Aldama when he came to Ein-Shemer. One version was that Aldama said that if there were protests, "they would find alibis."

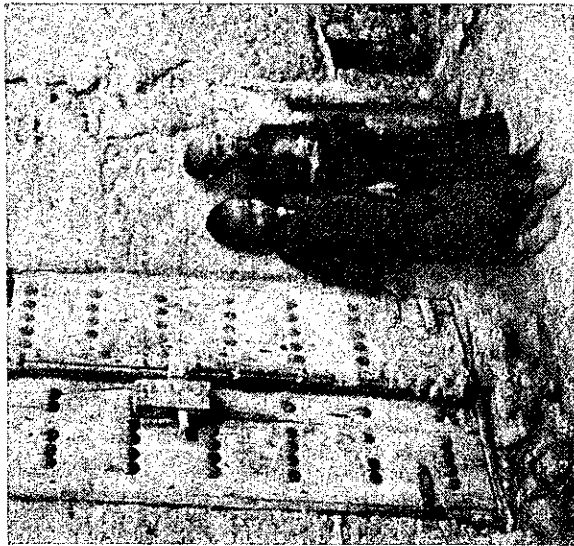
When the Minister of Education and Culture visited the camps at Ein-Shemer, he was told there were only isolated incidences, twelve in all, where sidelocks were removed along with the hair in accordance with Dr. Klein's instructions, since there was no other way to prevent the spreading of disease. As proof that removing the hair was only for this reason, they showed him seven girls whose braids had also been shorn for the same reason. On the other hand, other witnesses quoted another doctor, Dr. Dushinsky, who told of incidences of removal of sidelocks with no medical reason. Members of the Committee, at the time of their visit in Ein-Shemer, met many children without sidelocks, sporting heads full of hair with no signs of disease. One of them, Yosef Said Reivi, about eighteen years old, told several members of the Committee: "They said 'We must shave off the Yemenite's sidelocks.' I said 'I will make a war.' They said: 'We must; it is allowed.'"

Another youth, Yosef Avraham, (eighteen years old) said they removed his sidelocks in Ein-Shemer. They told him it was prohibited to have them. Another youth told the chairman of the Committee, Mr. Almalich: "One held my hand, one cut." This boy refused to give his name, saying 'I'm afraid.' Another youth, Yechia Yehoshua Chasan testified: "When I came to Israel I had sidelocks, but the barber removed them. He said it was because of illness." He added, "We are afraid; let them do whatever they do."

Rabbi Yitzchol Yitzchok testified:

"When I came to the camp, I found that they shaved the immigrants. I told the Yemenites this is not allowed. They said that they were told that this is the law in Israel. I don't know who told them this."

"I went with Meir Levi to the barbershop and found people waiting on line to be shorn. Meir told them they don't have to



Jewish children outside the gate to their home in San'a, Yemen. c. 1938.

remove their sidelocks. The people scattered and were not shaven. On the past Wednesday, I found an Ashkenazi barber shaving off sidelocks in the barbershop. I told him this is prohibited. He said to me, 'The Yemenites are paying me for this.' I turned to Yaakov, the director, and he told me, 'I did not order this.' On Friday I found a ten-year-old boy going with Yosef Kopteil and crying. His name is Shmuel Yechia Shoker. He said that he had received a note from Penina and a shilling, so that he could get a haircut. The barber cut his hair, but he kept his sidelocks. When he went to Penina, she told him, 'This is not good, go back to the barber and get it fixed.' He returned to the barber, who removed his sidelocks. I went to Yaakov, and he said: 'Whoever wants his sidelocks cut off should go to Tel Aviv; in the camp it is prohibited.'

One Yemenite, Shalom Yaakov, also from Ein-Shemer, testified: "On the day my nephew arrived at the camp, he was given a note to get a haircut. He went to the barber and told him to cut his hair, not his sidelocks. The barber told him that he didn't need them, and cut them without his permission, and he cried."

There is proof that this matter of the removal of sidelocks occurred in Ein-Shemer first, even before Aldama came. The matter was stopped after the Yemenite rabbis intervened. When Aldama came, he again tried to start this practice. Yehuda Rider testified: "Before Aldama came, I took the children to the barber. The Ashkenazi officer told him in my presence to remove the children's sidelocks. I asked Rabbi Yitzchok to intervene, and from then on the barber did not cut off sidelocks."

The testimony of Rider and Seigel has been quoted before regarding Aldama's meeting with the teachers immediately upon coming to the camp in which they said: "Aldama suggested bringing a barber from Pardes Chana to begin

'operation sidelocks'. This did not materialize because of technical difficulties. Aldama said that if afterwards they complained, then they would say there was lice...."

Mr. Seige I testified: "Regarding operation sidelocks, which Mr. Aldama announced at the teachers' meeting, he added that if there were a tumult over it we would say that it was for hygienic reasons, lice, etc...."

Aldama, in his testimony relies on a letter from Dr. Klein and denied that there was talk of an 'operation sidelocks' but rather they spoke of an 'operation hair'.

The members of the Committee discovered the same situation in Rosh HaAyin. In conversations with the Committee chairman, Shlomo Nochum (who was sixteen years old), told us that when he arrived in the Holy Land he was told, 'You don't need sidelocks in Israel.' Zecharia Tzadok, who is nineteen years old, said: "When we came, they shaved us. They said, 'There is no need for signs (sidelocks) in Israel. In Yemen you needed them because there are Arabs.'" Zecharia Ben Chatar, a Yemenite teacher, when asked why several children had no sidelocks said: "Some idiots said there is no need for sidelocks in Israel, and cut them off." To the question, whether they weren't removed because of lice, he said, "There were very few cases like that."

In the youth camp at Beit Lid, there is testimony that Tzipporah Zahavi, the counselor, organized the removal of sidelocks. Here are two direct testimonies to this effect. Shaul Sharabi said: "They cut off my sidelocks. The counselor, Tzipporah, went to Machane Bet, and brought a barber from there and said: 'Give the children haircuts.' I said: 'Not the sidelocks.' Tzipporah said: 'There is no need for sidelocks in Israel.' They left us bangs around our faces. I saw no lice or other diseases. Tzipporah made all this tumult. I told her it is prohibited. She said it is permissible."

Saadya Yehuda Avraham confirmed that only those whose sidelocks were removed were allowed to participate in a trip to Haifa. These are his words: "Tzippora brought a barber from Machane Bet and said: 'Anyone who wishes to go on the trip must have his sidelocks cut off.' They did this to fifty children. I had no hair so they cut only my sidelocks. Tzipporah told me 'If you won't cut them off, I'll throw you out of the room.'"

Tzippora Zahavi confirms in her testimony that she took a barber to Machane Bet and cut the children's hair because of lice. There was no inspection, and there was no one to occupy himself with combing and checking the boys to rid them of lice.

"I did not cut the girls hair, they cried when they wanted to cut. The boys did not protest. There were children who did not want their sidelocks removed, and we did not remove them." She also denies that there were explanations or persuasion.

One of the children whose sidelocks had been removed who was asked about it by the chairman of the Committee said:



Jewish boy knocking on door of his home in San'a, Yemen, c. 1938.

"They laughed at me in Kfar Sabba and I removed my sidelocks of my own free will."

In reality, there is not much importance to this matter of sidelocks. Mr. Lewin, for example, said that the sidelocks do not decide! There are religious Jews without sidelocks, and irreligious Jews with sidelocks. And in this vein, Rabbi Unterman expressed himself. But, again, we must see it from the viewpoint of the Yemenites. To them, the sidelocks are "signs" which differentiate between themselves and the gentiles. The camp directors know that the Yemenites are primitive and will not differentiate between the serious and less serious, and in this there was danger. Especially, in the eyes of the elders, when they remove this sign which sets the Jews apart from the gentiles, the youth will think that there is no difference and will not observe serious commandments. It would have been possible to prevent this entire matter which caused so much anger and added oil to the fire. True, one cannot ignore the technical difficulties of washing the hair and combing it, but this is not a sufficient reason.

Therefore, one cannot escape the fact that there was systematic intent in removal of the sidelocks which repeats itself in Ein-Shemer, Rosh HoAvin, Beit Lid and most probably in other places.

From the point of view of those who wished to remove any differences between Yemenite children and Israeli children, there was no need to hurry the process as soon as the immigrants arrived in Israel. It would have been possible to depend on the passage of time to do its job.

¹ To the disgrace of every Orthodox Jew, the Zionist Commission uses I. M. Lewin's name and his testimony to prove their point that it is not important to wear Peyos. Here they have an Agudath Israel representative, that was sent to their atheistic Parliament by the votes of Jews, who in many cases wear beards and peyos, and were sent to vote for this man by the command of a number of rabbis.

I. M. Lewin as Minister of Welfare in the first and second cabinets of the Zionists was the man responsible for separating the young married Yemenites who, following dictates of the Torah and Talmud, married even in the early teens when possible. Lewin as a supposedly religious Jew, should never have acquiesced to carry out these anti-Jewish laws of the Zionist state. But just as he sat still while the entire Yemeni Holocaust was in its ferocity and not only did he sit still, but as he himself had testified

11. Prohibition of Donning Tefillin and Removal of Yarmulkes

No proof was brought that it was prohibited to put on tefillin. This is a question in itself which cannot be blamed on the cultural directors or management of the camps.

It is the same with the removal of yarmulkes. The complaint is that when the immigrants come off the plane there were not enough hats or kerchiefs for the women. But even this cannot be considered intentional, and there is no doubt that it has been rectified.

Members of the Committee were impressed that, when they visited the camps, all the Yemenites had their heads covered. This is not so with the workers who go about bareheaded, and it is very easy to differentiate between an immigrant and a worker.

12. The Riot in the Camps in Ein Shemer

At the time when the Committee was busy investigating and intended according to its schedule to tour the camps, it was notified through the newspapers and through personal contacts of an uproar in the camps at Ein-Shemer which occurred on Tuesday, February 14, 1950.

The Committee decided to visit first the camp at Ein-Shemer. On Thursday, February 16, all the Committee members went there.

In the room of the manager of Machane Bet (who was slightly injured in the uproar), there was at that time the director of the Department of Absorption of the Jewish Agency, Dr. Jusfetei, and others. The Minister of the Interior, Immigration and Health, Mr. Shapiro, and the head of the police, Mr. Shirrit, had left the camp a short while before. From a conversation with those present, the background of the incident of two days before was revealed:

Two yeshiva students from Bnei Brak went to the camp and were stopped by the gatekeeper. They were taken to the director's room and asked to identify themselves; they before the Commission, he tried to calm American Orthodox Jewry from protesting against this genocide while he was in the U. S. A. fund raising for the U. J. A.

This episode in and of itself proves what the end result of dealing with the Zionists comes to.

refused. The police were called; meanwhile a large group of Yemenites gathered outside shouting, "Let us have the Rabbis!" When the police came, two shots were heard in the air and the Yemenite immigrants removed the iron nails which were stuck into the tents. One policeman was wounded. It is not clear which came first, the shots in the air or the removal of the nails from the tents. There is no dispute over these facts from any faction, either from informal discussion in the director's room on that day or from the testimony obtained by the Committee in its sessions on the following days: there was only a difference of opinion as to the purpose of the students' visit. The camp director felt they came to incite the people. One of the boys whose testimony was obtained argues that they had no intention of inciting anyone, but only to investigate the situation and to strengthen the religious beliefs of the immigrants and to see whether there are any youths who want to enroll in the yeshiva in Bnei Brak.

At the time of the conversation in the director's room, the Committee was shown announcements signed by religious organizations. At first, the impression was that the youths were caught handing out the notices. After several questions, it became clear that these notices had been distributed two weeks to a month earlier; there is no direct connection between the distribution of these notices and the boys' visit.

An alibi for detaining the boys was that the day before, one youth had come to the camp and remained to sleep there, although the director of Machane Aleph had asked him to leave. He was found hiding in one of the tents at night and removed forcibly by the director, who also tore his shirt. It was also explained that a few days before the incident, there was a gathering of Yemenite rabbis in Pardes Chana in which they complained about the government.

All this caused the camp directors to be very strict in prohibiting religious youths from entering the camps. Even

The Zionist atheists appointed by the Zionist government to whitewash the entire holocaust of Y-menite Jewry have the gall to declare that peyos are unimportant.

Dr. Jusfetel, who found that all the excitement died down quickly and no one knows exactly what the "Rabbis" wanted, came to the necessary conclusion from this incident that there must be careful investigation of all those entering the camps and that they should be closed to ordinary visitors.

Conclusions

The conclusions reached by the Government Commission are very cautious ones which do not take into account the severity of the actions on the part of the camp directors and **madrichim**. Nonetheless, the Commission members do admit that some very serious incidents of discrimination against observant Jews occurred. A summary of the Commission's conclusions follows:

"To examine all the accusations with reference to compulsion in the camps for new immigrants."

Section I of the Writ of Authorization:

The Committee has reached the following conclusions with reference to religious compulsion in the camps:

I. The government had no intention whatever to induce religious compulsion.

II. It was in general, a fatal mistake to place the education of children under the jurisdiction of the "Department for Language and Cultural Absorption of New Immigrants."

It was a particular mistake to put this department in charge of the education of children arriving from the East, specifically those migrating from Yemen, Tripoli and Morocco, for the following reasons:

1. The machinery of the above department, which was originally set up for dealing with adults, was not intended for the education of children. Many of the cultural directors, directors of schools, and teachers are lacking pedagogic training or teaching experience. This Commission established the astonishing fact that there was no contact whatever between the

Shabbos is important to them? What about kashrus? Women's modesty? And everything else that the Torah commands one to do?

Department for Culture and the educational wing of the very same office.

2. **The machinery was not adapted to the needs of a fundamentally religious element**, for whom the transgression of a major or even a minor religious command is likely to result in profound mental agitation and the shaking-off of all restraints. In this instance, the Commission wishes to note the complete absence of contact between the Department for Culture and the Religious Division of the Ministry for Education and Culture.

III. This is also true where social customs are imposed suddenly. There is grave danger that they will shake the very foundations of morality, though they may not, in themselves, violate religious observance.

IV. As a result of the lack of adaptation of the machinery of the Department of Culture, both to the education of children and to the customs and folk ways of the new immigrants, there was a demonstrable superficiality in dealing with the religious problems of the adult immigrant and the child.

The Department saw as a prime objective the adaptation of the child to the mode of living expressed in the community-at-large and in general daily life. The fundamental mistake that the Department made was in applying its own standards, or the standards it had set up for European immigrants, to the immigrants from Yemen, Tripoli and Morocco. It consequently set for itself a seemingly simple course of action.

V. With reference to the specific accusations, the Committee established the following:

1. The shearing of **sidelocks** was not a chance occurrence, but a **methodical practice**. It must be noted with sorrow that the Minister of Education and Culture was misled by the false information that there were only twelve cases of shorn sidelocks, and that these were due to disease.

2. **The disturbance of traditional religious study** was also a **methodical practice**. The overall lack of religious teachers is not sufficient cause to explain this occurrence, especially in view of the fact that most of those dealing with education in the camps had no previous pedagogic training themselves.

3. Insufficient care was taken in the observance of the Sabbath and prayer, and **there were even incidents where prayer was disturbed**.

VI. All this did not arise out of a conscious battle against religion, but rather to accelerate the process of adaptation. It would not be just to accuse the government representatives in the camps of "inquisition" and of "the annihilation of the culture of a people."

VII. The conflict regarding education in the camps was not free from party bias. The irreligious elements, on the one hand, wished to prepare the new adult immigrant and the youth for the Histadrut, and desired to prevent the strengthening of the religious parties. On the other hand, though the vigorous reaction in religious circles was sincere, aiming at the strengthening of religion among the new immigrants, the religious elements too were not free from the desire to increase the influence of the religious parties over the new immigrants and to decrease that of other parties.

VIII. The Commission has already ascertained that the root of the evil, the severe neglect of the matter of religious education in the camps, was under the jurisdiction of the Department for Culture.

Upon whose shoulders does the responsibility rest?

IX. The responsibility is not that of the Director of the educational wing, who demanded that educational affairs be transferred to his jurisdiction, and who was prepared, together with the machinery of this department, to accept them.

It is impossible to accuse explicitly Nachum Levin of this

state of affairs, in view of the fact that he argues that he did not wish to be in charge of educational matters. He has proven that on specific occasions he demanded of the Minister of Education that educational affairs be transferred to the educational wing, informing him that he and his department were not in a position to deal with this task.

It is also difficult to hold the administrative machinery of the Ministry of Education and Culture responsible in view of the fact that it was only newly organized and established, having no tradition or experience.

There then remains the Minister of Education and Culture, who carries the general responsibility for all the affairs of his Office. It is, however, impossible to place the responsibility upon the shoulders of Mr. Shazar, as he was ill during much of the period when these matters developed, and possibility for fundamental and personal attention on his part was lacking. Hence, the responsibility is shifted back to its major source - the government, in its entirety, - which bears collective responsibility for all the affairs of state, including the education of the new immigrant.

X. However, the direct responsibility for the weighty offenses against religious education in the camps must be borne by Nachum Levin. Though the Commission absolves him of the general unfounded charges of "conducting an inquisition" and "annihilating the culture of a people," the Commission does regard him as responsible both to the government and to the public for his own deeds and for the actions of the administrative machine under his supervision, in view of the fact that he was the one who mapped out the zones of activity and who set up the machinery. The workers in the department and the camps share this responsibility, particularly to the degree that they exaggerated the scope of activity assigned to them, or were **too strict in the performance of their task**. The Commission wishes, in particular, to denounce the behavior of Mr. Aldama,

the cultural director in the camp at Ein-Shemer, and Tzipporah Zahavi, an instructor and guide in the children's camp in Beit Lid 7.

Section 2 of the Writ of Authorization: "To ascertain the validity of the accusations in the periodicals, and discover those responsible for them."

XI. The answer to the question of the validity of the accusations in the newspapers may be found in the above conclusions the Commission has reached with reference to compulsion in the camps.

XII. The responsibility for the publicity in the periodicals rests, as is customary, with the periodicals and their writers. To the extent that the periodical is the organ of a specific political party, the responsibility also rests with the party.

Section 3 of the Writ of Authorization: "To examine the sources of the propaganda carried on in the diaspora with reference to the aforementioned accusations."

XIII. The sources of the propaganda in the diaspora regarding the accusations of religious compulsion in the camps may be found in religious circles in the Jewish state as well as in the Israeli press. The sign was given by the discussion of the question at the Committee on Education of the Knesset, and demands for moral assistance were then made of the rabbis and of the World Mizrahi. The latter attempted to induce the press to participate.

XIV. One must not see in any of these tendencies the slightest intention to carry on activity in opposition to the state of Israel. Similarly, the Commission does not regard the organization of the Religious Bloc in New York and the telegram sent to members of the government as motivated by opposition to the state of Israel.

XV. The mass meeting in Manhattan Center was not

directed from Israel, though it may be attributed, indirectly, to the effects of the information produced here regarding the situation in the camps.

XVI. The meeting was not appropriate in its form. However, no fault may be found with the content of its resolutions.

XVII. The Commission believes that it is one of the privileges of diaspora Jewry to keep an eye on what is taking place in the state, particularly on those matters pertaining to the totality of Jewry. So long as it does not interfere with the internal affairs of the state, diaspora Jewry has the right to apply to the Israeli government with appropriate suggestions and demands.

Jerusalem, May 9, 1950

Chairman: Gad Fromkin

Members: Abraham Elmaliach

Yitzchok Ben-Zvi

Rabbi Kalman Kahane

Rabbi A. H. Shaag

The Commission concluded that the shearing of sidelocks was a methodical practice; the disturbance of traditional religious study was a methodical practice; and prayer was even disturbed. They heard testimony from scores of people from many different camps and verified the truth of their testimony. Yet, in spite of the fact that these things occurred not in one camp, but in many at the same time, they concluded that "all of this did not arise out of a conscious battle against religion." The Commission itself called the incidents part of a "methodical practice." "Methodical" means a conscious, well-thought out plan with a particular goal in mind. In this case, that goal was the systematic destruction of traditional religious observance, with force, starvation and intimidation as the means to achieve that goal. Once the Sephardic Jews had lost their refuge — their

religion -- they would turn to the state for all their needs. Their heads could be filled with Zionist propaganda instead of Torah, and their hands could work the land on the kibbutzim or carry rifles for the glory of the state.

Abuses Against Religion Continue

Education

Even though the Commission confirmed the charges of the denial of religious education and observance in the camps, no practical action resulted. David Zvi Pinkas, Chairman of the United Religious Bloc in Israel, said in an interview in *Modiin*, November 5, 1950:

...A bitter struggle is being conducted by the Religious Bloc against the pernicious methods used to divorce immigrant children coming from Yemen and North Africa from religious education and traditions. Superhuman efforts are being made by the Religious Bloc in the Knesset to prevent such action. The Government Commission found that the conduct of the Mapai counselors was little short of criminal. But to this day the government's decision to open religious schools for the religious immigrant has not been implemented.

In the course of this struggle to secure religious education in the camps, the Mizrahi and the Agudath Israel united to form a single religious school grouping. But while schools for children of nonreligious parents were opened in the camps by the government, no similar institutions have been established for the religious children, who constitute the vast majority. The pretext for this omission is that suitable buildings are not available.

Another painful question is that of religious

settlements. In the Labor villages and transit camps, the left-wing elements have not stopped short of any means of intimidation, including deprivation of employment and even of food to force parents to send their children to the Mapai-controlled schools. A large number of complaints made by newcomers in this connection are in our possession. The Religious Bloc has, on innumerable occasions, made representations to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education in this regard. However, the only responses were finely-phrased evasions which were devoid of all practical value.

Spiritual, moral and economic pressure are still being used in the field of education, and all representations in this regard have failed to move the authorities to guarantee freedom of education for the religious Jew, and particularly for the religious new immigrants, to enable them to give their children schooling in keeping with their own traditional spirit.

The transfer of more than one-thousand children of religious parents to a system of education which runs counter to all sacred values; the transfer of religious children from Iraq, who, without the consent of their parents and contrary to their own tradition, have been dispatched to settlements and institutions in which the spirit is anti-religious, proves that methods of coercion are still being used in education.

State Education Law

The years that followed the government investigation saw only "concessions" which gave nothing away, "agreements" which had no practical application, and governmental decisions directed toward perpetuation of Histadrut's hold on immigrant education.

Finally, on August 12, 1953, the Knesset passed the State

Education Law which presumably put an end, once and for all, to politics and compulsion in education. This law, still in effect, provided for the abolishment of party schools and the establishment of two general school systems -- Government and Government Religious¹ -- with the parent entitled to a free choice between the two.

Unfortunately, the passage of the State Education Law merely proved to be the opening bell of another round in the battle for free choice in education. Almost immediately after its passage, it was evident that, although the law specifically guarantees freedom of parental choice in education, its general effect would be no more than to force immigrant children into more efficient irreligious schools. Old abuses were continued and, in addition, a new one was brought into sharp focus: discrimination in supplying school buildings and facilities.

With the revival of mass North African immigration from the end of 1954, the abuses reached a new height of intensity. A number of factors, ranging from inadequacies in the law to a high-handed disregard of it wherever it threatened to upset the status quo, combined to block any reforms the law might have brought about.

A good part of the State Education Law is devoted to detailed provision for free parental choice between the two school systems; but it is packed with enough strategically placed loopholes to allow for the exclusion of large segments of the immigrant population from its guarantee of educational choice.

Some of the more intensive religious schools branched off to form a third system -- the Independent (Atzmai) or Recognized (Mukar) school system, which is only partially supported and controlled by the government.

The Ministry of Education, for instance, did not find it difficult to maintain that the law's guarantee of religious schooling for those whose parents request it applied only in

¹ Some of the more intensive religious schools branched off to form a third system, the Independent (Atzmai) or Recognized (Mukar) school system, which is only partially supported and controlled by the government.

communities where a religious school already existed. What if the community maintained only a nonreligious school? In fact, the parents were compelled to send their children to this school, unless other clauses of the law pertaining to the founding of new schools were applicable. But the prerequisite for setting up a new school was very often impossible to meet, for a school could not be established unless a minimum of twenty-five pupils were registered for its first and second grades. Similarly, a nonreligious school could not switch to Government-Religious auspices or vice versa, even upon request of all the parents, unless there were twenty-five pupils in grades 1 and 2.

These restrictions had the practical effect of insuring perpetual nonreligious control of education in a large number of immigrant villages and settlements which had never had a religious school. In a typical village of about eighty families, for example, there may have been 80-100 children of elementary school age distributed through all eight grades. It is obvious that even the request of an overwhelming majority of the parents for Government-Religious education would most likely not prove sufficient for establishment of a religious school.

Rabbi Bezalel Cohen, head of Mizrahi's Education Department, wrote in the New York Jewish Horizon of June,

1. Religious communities controlled by the nonreligious parties were not even given an opportunity during the transition from party education to unified education (following the law's passage) to change their educational systems. All Histiadrut and General-Zionist schools were simply placed in the Government-Education system and Mizrahi schools in the Government-Religious System, without recourse to registrations aimed at determining what the parents actually desired.

In the case of new villages being settled, the Jewish Agency often arranged for a few nonreligious families to be the first in a village (and set up a nonreligious school), thus assuring the nonreligious school system of a permanent monopoly in the village.

1956: "The immigrants are slowly beginning to throw off their fear of Mapai control, and entire villages are requesting transfer of their schools to the religious branch of education." The absurd interpretation of the education law by the Office of Education made the fulfillment of these requests almost impossible.

It must be noted, too, that when a community met the requirements for establishment of a new school, it faced long delays before its application was acted upon, and even then the parents' requests for religious schooling were rejected.

Another basic flaw in the State Education Law was its lack of provisions for religious representation in the Ministry of Education, which meant only the Mizrahi. The law did provide for a Religious Education Council, but its function was mainly advisory. Implementation and interpretation of the State Education Law and top-level supervision of both the religious and nonreligious school system was in the hands of the Minister of Education and his six district supervisors. Prior to the passage of the law, it was agreed to appoint a religious deputy supervisor wherever the supervisor was nonreligious, but no religious deputies were appointed. In general, all through the Ministry of Education's higher grades of services there were very few religious officials. Thus, from the outset, Israel's dual system of education retained a monolithic administrative complexion, with the party in control of the government also in control of both branches of the educational system.

Zionist Disregard of the Law

Even more significant than direct flaws in the law was the widespread violation of its "effective" provisions, clearly demonstrating the fact that as long as the determination to fight religious education existed in the Zionist State no number of laws would substantially alter the situation. Though free choice of school was plainly required by the State Education Law,

village and city councils and officials of the nonreligious settlements just as plainly did not provide for it, hindered it, and refused to abide by its choices.

In the settlements of the nonreligious parties, where most of the immigrants ended up via the Jewish Agency's party "key", the situation was shockingly simple, with hardly any resort to subtlety. The officials did not allow the establishment of religious schools.

Such a program of repression did not operate, of course, without outbreaks of mass protests and passive resistance. But settlement **madrachim** and secretaries managed to keep the protests "within bounds" through threats, economic reprisals and blunt strong-arm methods. In the settlement of Achuzam, for instance, where the immigrants succeeded, after many attempts, in submitting an appeal for religious schooling to the Ministry of Education (where it ended up hopelessly entangled in red tape), the directors brought in hooligans to beat up the demanding parents.

What was perhaps the most clear-cut demonstration of the Zionists' intent to impose their own "law" upon the new immigrants occurred at Charuvit, a transit camp of Mapai's T'nuat Hamoshavin. There, the directors successfully flouted the unanimous desire of the parents for religious schooling, the directives of the Ministry of Education, and the State Education Law. A registration for school was held, but the Ministry of Education nullified it (upon the demand of the religious parties) because the parents had all been deceived into registering for nonreligious education; a second registration was cancelled by the Ministry when it became apparent that the immigrants were being intimidated into staying away from the registration; the third was arbitrarily thwarted by the camp director himself who contended that a transit camp, after all, did not require a school registration (despite the fact that neighboring transit

camps were at that very moment conducting school registration). Though the Charuvit scandal was brought to the attention of top Israeli officials, fought out in Cabinet meetings and reported in the newspapers, Mapai prevailed and a religious school was never set up.

Discrimination in the Towns

But compulsion in education was not confined to its homeground, the Zionist-controlled settlements; it was practiced (though usually in more subtle form) in the **maabarot**, villages and cities as well. In these places, compulsion mainly took the form of discrimination in providing school facilities by the Jewish Agency and by village and city councils. It also involved at least two government ministries, Education and Labor.

The nub of the matter was that whatever the law may have provided, it was the municipal authorities (in the case of the older villages and towns) and the Jewish Agency (in the case of **maabarot** and new villages) who provided the school buildings and facilities.¹ But the authorities showed little inclination to abide by parents' choices and the state's own laws.

Even a Mizrahi report cited the example of the civic leader who differentiated between 'our children' and 'religious children', and another who objected to religious schools on the grounds that 'they spoil the neighborhood'. The same report describes a number of abuses commonly practiced in the towns and cities:

A good part of (the religious) schools are set up only after a prolonged battle with local authorities, and even then the authorities are not interested in maintaining the schools. There is discrimination

1. The National government administers education, provides personnel and salaries, while the municipalities provide buildings and maintenance.

too... in selection of lots for religious school construction, in the quality of the schools and their size. In many places the religious schools are consigned remote parts of town and are limited to classrooms, while the nonreligious schools contain many additional facilities, such as auditoriums, workshops, etc.... There are also long delays in implementing any resolutions the municipal councils may pass in behalf of the religious schools....

In Bet Shemesh, reported **Hatzofeh** (November 22, 1955), the nonreligious school of 240 children was housed in a modern two-story school building, while the 350 children receiving Government-Religious education studied in an inadequate little building. Though the authorities promised the parents a new building by Chanukah, the promise did not materialize. And in Tel Mond, a Ministry of Education offer to lend the local authorities the funds needed for construction of a religious school was turned down, and the Ministry let it go at that.

The Ministry of Labor, which was responsible for school construction in certain immigrant areas, entered the scene of school building inequity with a construction policy that did not jibe with Israel's dual education system. It set up one large school building for each district of twenty-four villages, instead of two smaller buildings to provide for choice of education. Circumstances being what they are in the Zionist State, all of these schools fell to the nonreligious system, and many thousand of religious children were compelled to attend nonreligious schools. 1

The Ministry of Education also ignored a petition by parents for a religious school in Gevim-Dorot. **HaTzofeh** of December 4, 1955 reported:

The parents here at Gevim-Dorot announced they

1. *Din V'Cheshbon* 1948-1955, Mizrahi World Center, Jerusalem, pp. 146, 147.

will not rest until a religious school is set up for them, nor will they send their children to the school prepared for them. A delegation of religious parents from the **Maabarah** Gevim-Dorot contacted various organizations in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and also complained bitterly to Chief Rabbi Herzog that authorities are forcing upon them an education devoid of the Torah and religion. In their lands of origin -- Persia, Kurdistan, Morocco and Tripoli--they were devoted to the Torah. Nevertheless, the people here who arrange accommodations for them have set up an irreligious school for their sons and daughters.

The parents of forty-one children submitted a written petition last June to the Minister of Education and to other officials, including the Supervisor for the Dorot District and the District Council, which was signed by the parents and contained all necessary details such as ages of the children, etc. and the request that religious schooling be arranged for the children. To this day, they have not even received an acknowledgment of the petition.

Meanwhile, because of the silence of the Ministry of Education, the parents began to assemble the children in the synagogue to teach them the Torah and Prayers. But to their great anguish, older children of the nonreligious school appeared and disturbed the studies. The parents ask: "Who is responsible for the fact that our sons and daughters have been turned into enemies?"

The Jewish Agency's discriminatory practices in provision of school facilities for its **Maabarot** and new villages (similar to

1. *Din V'Cheshbon* 1948-1955, Mizrahi World Center (Jerusalem) pp. 146-147.

the abuses of civic authorities) round out the picture. Hatzofeh of February 21, 1955, summed up the situation in Jewish Agency-administered places:

From the moment the Great (North African) Aliyah began, the Jewish Agency has exhibited a prejudicial attitude toward the establishment of religious schools in new settlements. The buildings it has provided have been very few, were set up only after long and wearisome campaigns, and are much too small in size for the number of pupils using them. Now the Jewish Agency is "freezing" the situation under the pretext that the **maabarot** are on the way out anyhow. The nonreligious school system, however, is being provided generously with buildings, with no hardships or restrictions involved.

The Hatzofeh article continued with a detailed summary of conditions in a number of Jewish Agency **maabarot** and villages, illustrating its discriminatory building policies, e.g. K'far MeSubim, where 106 children registered for Government - Religious education, but were not provided with a building, though there were empty ones in the village.

Violence and Intimidation

Though school-building discrimination served as the distinctive Zionist answer to the challenge of the State Education Law in the cities and towns, older, more personal types of compulsion were by no means abandoned. Those abuses took many different forms and were prevalent wherever "legal" tactics did not help. Some examples:

--Distribution of hot school lunches only to children in the nonreligious school.

--Threats to parents that they would lose their membership in the Histadrut (labor union) or Kupat Cholim (hospitalization and medical service) if they entered their children in religious schools.

--Physical violence to keep parents from entering the registration office.

The Tel Aviv Hatzofeh of December 12, 1955 reported an incident which took place in Achuzam:

The campaign of oppression against the inhabitants of Achuzam, north of Beersheba, to deter them from their request for religious education has reached a new height with the organized bloody attacks of the last few days. Twenty-four villagers, all from the religious community, some of them severely wounded, are still in jail after having been arrested four days ago. Our reporter, who made an on-the-spot check, uncovered scandalous facts regarding the behavior of the police and the local **madrichim**. At the request of the religious Ministers, the government will make a special investigation of the whole affair.

After the **madrichim** had failed in all attempts to force withdrawal of requests for transfer of the local school to Government-Religious auspices, they turned their attention to a new plan, whereby nonreligious families were to be brought to the village to create a majority against the parents requesting religious education. Pleas from the residents asking a delay in bringing in new families until the various areas of conflict could be cleared up were turned down by the local Secretary, who continues in office despite the repeated majority expressions of "no-confidence" and requests for his resignation.... The Secretary, Machluf Alul, accordingly brought in a number of new families from other settlements and **maabarot**. When word of this development spread, the immigrants sent a three-man delegation to protest to the Secretary.... As the delegation appeared at the village clubhouse, a group of youths armed with

hatchets, shovels and clubs came out of the clubhouse and began beating the immigrants.

Several people attending a **Pidyon Haben** celebration were attacked and wounded. Some of the religious immigrants had to run to Shalvah, a nearby village, to call the police after the Secretary refused them permission to use the village telephone. The policeman who took the call reportedly said, "First let them knock you around a bit, then we'll come."

When the police arrived, they began arresting religious residents from a list supplied by the Secretary. They even took into custody people who had arrived after the fight, but whose names were on the list.

After the police left, armed groups of the Secretary's people roamed the village, terrorizing those residents who had signed petitions for a religious school.

A shocking campaign of intimidation against parents and terror against children, preceded by deception of parents in school registration, was reported from the **maabarrah** (transit camp) in Acre in **Hatzofeh** (November 30-December 4, 1955) and **Yediot Acharanot** (December 7, 1955).

A report from Acre described the deep agitation caused the immigrants immediately upon their arrival by the officials of the irreligious school. The officials went from parent to parent registering their children for the irreligious school without telling them what kind of a school it was and that there are two systems -- religious and irreligious. When the deception was discovered, the parents got in touch with Religious Education officials and sought their help in nullifying the registration, and also prepared a petition for submission to the Department of Education, demanding the transfer of their children immediately to the religious school.

Hatzofeh of December 4 reported the submission to the City Council of Acre of a strong complaint by the immigrants regarding the deception, and added:

Also presented to the city council was a demand to put an end to the kidnapping. Indeed, the scandal goes on and has reached the point where the kidnappers appear regularly every morning near the **maabarrah** to grab children on their way to the religious school. A state of tension rules the **maabarrah** which is guarded into the late hours of the night from any infiltration by Religious Education officials coming to advise the immigrants.

As a means of convincing the parents of the advisability of irreligious education, the General Employment Office entered the scene. Those who registered their children for the religious school received a notification from the Office that they need not come there as they would be notified by mail if there were any work for them. And so they were deprived of the basic right to work as punishment for not following the "line" laid down by the authorities for school registration.

Reporter L. Reisman, writing in the independent **Yediot Acharanot** of December 7, 1955, portrayed with bitter irony the tragedy of the kidnappings:

The father of one girl came to take his daughter home from school, but was shocked to discover that she hadn't arrived at the religious school that morning.

They advised him to look into the **Histadrut** school before turning to the police. There he found his daughter.

Twelve-year-old Yvonne Monsando, originally from Casablanca, had received a free bus ticket (supplied by the municipality) from the director of the Religious School. While she was standing in her hut

one day, reciting her Shmoneh Esrey prayer, a couple of "modern educators" entered and snatched the ticket from her hand.

When they attempted to drag Yvonne out, too, she grabbed hold of the doorposts and resisted. The kidnapers left her in her home to ponder the cultural superiority of Acre over the "Casbahs" in North Africa.

This terror against children helped to make religious schooling an uncomfortable affair for immigrant parents even after they finally succeeded in entering their children in a religious school.

Hatzofeh of March 15, 1956 commented dismally on this shameful state of affairs:

If some extremely trustworthy person would have reported to us that in Israel they distribute hot lunches to needy children only in the nonreligious school, but deprive the religious school children of the same service, though many of the latter have been pronounced by a doctor to be suffering from malnutrition, or that a social worker in Israel told a Jew whose hut had burned down: "You won't get any help from us because your child is registered in the religious school" -- if someone would have told us this, we would have rejected his report as completely unfounded. But what are we to do, now that we have seen these things with our own eyes?....

Thus, by a combination of the law's own inadequacy and the regular abuse of the law by the very men who should have implemented it, the State Education Law was rendered a farce; and the chances of religious schooling for a child arriving in the Holy Land were a toss-up, with the odds heavily weighted against him.

Coalition Promises Unfulfilled

Any hopes that this state of affairs would be reversed by Mizrahi's entrance into the government on November 3, 1955, were decisively dispelled by the ensuing events. The pre-entrance promises of reform in education simply never materialized. The abuses not only continued, but grew in volume with the acceleration of North-African immigration. And the protests of religious party newspapers, led by Mizrahi's own **Hatzofeh**, reached a new crescendo of indignation.

On November 22, 1955, in an issue reporting school discrimination in a number of settlements, **Hatzofeh** commented exasperatedly:

Ministers of Education come and go, but restrictions against religious education continue....And it is becoming increasingly clear that these are not chance occurrences or deviations of minor officials, but are the products of a deliberate policy originating in the highest circles and encouraged by them.

Hatzofeh of November 23, 1955, editorialized:

Government-Religious education is fighting for its existence against the tactics of the Ministry of Education, officials of the Jewish Agency and local authorities. Here they nullify a registration, there they force religious Jews to register their children in irreligious schools, and in other places they duck their obligation to set up buildings for religious schools....

After reporting abuses in Mansi, Achuzam, Karkur, Acre and Bet Shemesh, the editorial continues:

The above incidents are only part of the story; the list can be greatly expanded. There is no longer any doubt that powerful official forces are at work to

prevent, at any cost, the opening of new religious schools and to hinder the existence and growth of those already established....

At an extraordinary meeting in Tel Aviv, Hatzofeh of December 5, 1955 reported, officials of the Government Religious Education System reviewed the situation and strongly condemned "the compulsion and discrimination against Government religious Education throughout the land." Following is an excerpt from the Hatzofeh story:

Mr. Y. Bernstein stated that although the State Education Law provides for absolute equality of opportunity between the two educational systems, the law's implementation is in the hands of the enemies of religious education, who are imposing restrictions on construction of buildings, provision of facilities, etc. The speaker listed a great number of current abuses in school registration, and grave violations of the law....

In the spring of 1956, member of Knesset Yizhak Raphael (Hapoel Mizrachi) presented a petition to the Minister of Education, containing a list of forty cases of Education Law violations affecting entire communities, as well as individuals, and demanding the appointment of a Knesset committee to investigate the matter. Instead, the Education Minister sent out two officials from his own office, who conducted a quick "investigation" and, according to the Minister, reported that the charges were untrue.

Mr. Raphael, in reply, sharply attacked the attempt to whitewash the scandal, noted the Minister's failure to answer the forty documented charges, and reiterated his demand for "an objective parliamentary committee which will devote its time to clarification and investigation of the problem." Added Mr. Raphael:

If such a committee will conclude that I am unjustified in my charges, I shall publicly retract my

charges from the rostrum of the Knesset. But if it will conclude that the charges are true -- that there indeed exists a state of threats and pressure against religious education -- then it will be up to the Minister of Education and his subordinates to rectify the situation and remove this shameful stain from the field of education....

Conclusion

All in all, one tragic fact emerges from a study of the educational scene in the 1950's in the Zionist State: The great majority of religious immigrants in the Zionist State could not exercise their official right to give their children a religious education. Taken out of his land of origin with deceptive promises, the religious immigrant was confronted with a host of barriers set up to block his simple desire to bring up his children in the ways of his fathers. Laws and ordinances proved inherently incapable of guaranteeing his rights; enforcement agencies worked against him; and civic authorities and settlement officials successfully violated whatever effective provisions the law contained. Through the use of a variety of tactics, ranging from hair-splitting (at Charuvit) to head-splitting (at Achuzam), they performed the remarkable feat of keeping the nonreligious/religious ratio of students stable in the face of an overwhelming influx of religious children into the Holy Land. The attempts of the religious parties to alleviate the plight of the immigrants -- the "concessions", "agreements" and "assurances" obtained from the nonreligious parties -- like efforts to get someplace in a nightmare, all turned out to be frustratingly futile.

From the inception of the state of Israel, the nonreligious parties deliberately followed a policy of throwing in "concessions" when the pressure became too great and then preventing their fulfillment.

A glance at the Zionist State's immigration and education

statistics is tragically informative. From 1948 to 1955, Israel's population more than doubled (from 655,000 to 1,526,000)¹ by the stream of immigrants entering the country. **More than half of these immigrants** (370,000 out of 735,000)² came from strongly religious Asiatic and African communities. Their significance in regard to education becomes even greater when it is realized that their unusually high number of children per family helped to increase the elementary school population **almost fourfold** (from 72,000 to 275,000)³.

But the figures in education for the same years, instead of showing a correspondingly sharp rise in religious-school attendance, exhibit only a blank-faced lack of correlation. From 1948 to the passage of the State Education Law in 1953, the percentage of children in religious schools remained fairly stable (fluctuating between 28% and 30%)⁴. From passage of the law to 1955 -- despite the "guarantees" contained in the law, the heavy North African immigration, and the virtual absence of European immigration -- the figure barely rose to 31.5%.⁵

The body responsible for placing the vast majority of the religious immigrants in the hands of those who denied them religious education was the Jewish Agency, the organization representing Zionists the world over.

Anti-Religious Settlements

The matter of religious education in the camps and villages was not the only problem for the immigrants. Daily life was rife

1. *Facts and Figures*, Israeli Office of Information, New York, 1955, pp. 11-13. (Figures are rounded.)

2. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Din V'Cheshbon 1948-1955*, Mizrahi World Center, Jerusalem, 1955, pp. 78, 94.

5. *Facts and Figures*, p. 55.

with attempts to tear the immigrants away from Orthodox Judaism. When the Zionists had recruited these people for immigration to the Holy Land, they had promised that they would be able to maintain the traditional observance of their faith. But even after the Government Commission uncovered widespread abuses of religious freedom, the situation did not improve.

On May 25, 1955 a pathetic delegation, representing the settlers of Otzem, appeared at Hapoel Hamizrachi's Tel Aviv office. Their grievance was tragically familiar: They had been placed in an anti-religious settlement in violation of promises made in North Africa. Following are parts of the **Hatzofeh** (May 26, 1955) story:

The immigrant delegation was made up of strictly religious Jews, most of them bearded, all terrified by the attempts to force them and their children away from their faith. "All we desire," they said, "is to be settled under religious auspices. We can't bear to witness any longer the atheistic acts which are performed before our eyes." They showed our reporter a document (given them in Morocco) which assured them of religious settlement....

When they were taken to the Otzem settlement, they explained their religious requirements as detailed in the agreement, but the officials told them, "This is a Mapai settlement. You must apply to the Ministry of Religion for your religious needs."

But this did not end it. They began to explain to these faithful Jews why it 'isn't necessary' to be religious in the land of Israel. "They tried to tell us," said one of them, "that it is permissible in **Aretz** to eat pork. I never imagined that when we come to the Land of Israel we would hear such words. One of the

officials brazenly told us that there isn't a G-d. As soon as we heard this, we put our fingers to our ears so as not to hear such blasphemy."

The **madrachim** (counselors) also tried to separate the children from their parents and to get them used to going around with bare heads. Two days ago one of the leaders assembled the children and said to them, "Why do you listen to your parents? They are crazy. In Aretz there is no need to be religious."

These occurrences so incensed the immigrants that they sent a delegation to the Jewish Agency to protest the situation in the camps. But the Agency refused to see the delegation. Then they went to the Hapoel Hamizrachi office to demand transfer to a religious settlement. All they wanted, they said, was to continue in Israel with the same self-sacrificing devotion they practiced in the midst of the Arabs.

In the winter of 1955, in the midst of the highly-publicized "From Ship to Village" and "From City to Village" campaigns, came a flurry of startling newspaper accounts telling of the abandonment by their settlers of a number of flourishing agricultural villages in the Upper Galilee. These villages had enjoyed some degree of cultural autonomy until the T'nuat Hamoshavim (Mapai) decided it was time to move in and bring the villages into line with Mapai ideology. Following are excerpts from two news stories on the incidents:

Hamodia, November 29, 1955:

"Let the **madrachim** remain in the villages, we will go to the city." This is the cry of many of the settlers who, for the past five years, have expended all their energies toward the building of the villages.

In Yovel the majority of settlers have left, in spite of the satisfactory economic situation. The abandonment of the villages is a result of the anti-

religious pressure of the leftist **madrachim**, which has become too great for the settlers to bear.

A half-year ago, the **madrachim** decided to strengthen their anti-religious campaign when they realized that a large portion of the youth had remained faithful to religion, a situation which aroused disappointment in Histadrut circles, who view the new immigrants as their own private property.

In the Ein Zeitim settlement, too, the movement to the cities has begun. The T'nuat Hamoshavim is now exerting strenuous efforts to replace those who have left the village with new settlers, but it obviously has no intention of abandoning its destructive anti-religious practices.

The procedure of 'political land-settlement' carried on by the Jewish Agency, under which the settlers are distributed among the parties without being asked for their view on the matter, has greatly damaged the settlement movement and the ingathering of new immigrants.

Haaretz, December 23, 1955:

During the coming month, two settlements, Yovel and Margaliyot, will be emptied of half of their settlers. They had lived there three years and had performed to the great satisfaction of the Settlement Department. They report that their prospects of establishing themselves as farmers in these places have been very good. The Jewish Agency will certainly bring in new immigrants. Statistically, the incident is perhaps unimportant, but the statistics cannot hide the fact that we have again committed one of those grave follies which have come to

characterize the settlement of new places these past years. In this case, out of a studied disregard for the way of life of the Oriental Jews and in violation of basic sociological and anthropological laws, we have sought to make the settlers take a leap, all at once, from the 6th century to the 20th century; we have attempted to replace the patriarchal father with the settlement secretary; the family with the movement; and religion with the 'ideology' of T'nuat Hamoshavim....What happened at Yovel is characteristic of what has happened in dozens of other settlements since the mass aliyah began.

Following is **Hatzofeh's** October 20, 1955 portrayal of the paradox of life in Dimonah, another village of religious immigrants under Mapai domination:

The Minister of Labor, Mrs. Meyerson, has expanded the functions of her department. It now concerns itself not only with the physical welfare of the settlers, but also with their spiritual welfare. This is particularly true of the immigrant settlements where the workbooks of **Solel Boneh** (Histadrut construction cooperative) are used to prepare the soul for the proper spiritual guidance.

On **Shabas Shuvah** (Sabbath of Repentance), Mapai arranged a dedication festival in Dimonah. Many guests arrived in automobiles, an orchestra played, and speakers delivered fiery orations. The settlers of Dimonah, simple Torah-observant North African immigrants, were stunned by this desecration of the Sabbath. They had come to the Negev to live as generations of Jews had lived before them.

Though they have acclimated themselves to the place, they feel resentful toward their supposed

benefactors who act as though they and not the government provide the employment and dwellings, and are therefore, entitled to indoctrinate the immigrants with Mapaism.

Hatzofeh (November 22, 1955) reported the bitterness prevailing among the immigrants at Hatzetim over the following incident: When the poor immigrants there could not pay a six months in advance rent to the Amidar organization for use of its building as a synagogue, Director Chaim Cohen ordered them out of the building and said, "If the full sum is not paid within a few days, I will throw the Torah scroll into the street and close the synagogue."

Yediot Acharonot, May 29, 1955 published a photograph of immigrants behind barbed wire and stated:

No, this is not a chapter from the history of the Illegal Immigration. This scene of Jews emigrating to their homeland and being forced into a barbed-wire camp occurred in May 1955, in the famed city of Haifa of the free state of Israel.

But this time there was no announcement of protest rallies; and the people of Haifa did not close their businesses en masse and hurry to the port of Haifa to express their bitterness over the deprivation of their brothers' freedom.

The seeds of the disturbance were sown when 200 religious immigrants from Demnat, Morocco chose a Hapoel Hamizrachi settlement instead of one run by Mapai. But the article states, "...the 'secret agreement' concerning the 'adoption' of immigrants was violated. The Hapoel Hamizrachi's quota of immigrants to which it is 'entitled' had already been filled," while Mapai's quota had not.

When the ship carrying the immigrants docked at Haifa, representatives of the T'nuat Hamoshavim (Mapai Settlement

Movement) interrogated them to determine the extent of their piety. The representatives decided that the immigrants were not religious so they should be sent to Charuvit, even though the Moroccans protested.

After a heated argument between Mapai representatives and those of Hapoel Hamizrachi, some higher officials decided to transfer the whole group to the empty Shaar HaAliyah camp, where they would await a decision on their permanent place of settlement. The immigrants were locked into the camp, and guards were placed around it. Not even relatives of the Moroccans were allowed in. One reporter was finally allowed in. He wrote:

They complained to me that all of them were religious (most of them were bearded) and that from the moment they left Morocco, there was no doubt in their minds that they would be placed in a religious settlement. They threatened to get in touch with the other families of their village who were still in Marseilles to keep them from leaving for Israel.

There is no doubt that the letters to these families are on their way, and it is easy to picture the kind of impression that they will make -- among them and among the hundreds of other families who are waiting their turn to emigrate at the camp in Marseilles.¹

Conditions in other camps and settlements were related in the P'eylim publication **Meilhamisrachesh B'Yeshuvei Haolim**, issues 1 and 11. Some of the accounts have also appeared in **Hamodia**, October 17, 1955 and **Sh'otim**, August 22 and October 14, 1955.

In K'far Garen the immigrants, who were from Meknes, Morocco, were given a ramshackle hut without a Holy Ark to serve as a synagogue. Requests for basic religious needs, such as

1. Yediot Acharonot, May 29, 1955.

a **mikvah**, a synagogue and a religious school, were denied. Intense pressure was exerted on the parents to send their children to irreligious kibbutzim. The immigrants were shocked at conditions in Israel which prevented them from fulfilling their religious obligations and properly raising their children.

Immigrants in Tzafon Atlit reported similar conditions in that leftist village. Their children were denied a religious school, and they were pressured to give up their religious observances.

Religious arrangements in the Mansi **maabarah**, which was inhabited by Moroccan immigrants, were also inadequate, while the clubhouse for youth was large and well-equipped. Even when the parents chose religious education for their children at the school registration, it was denied by the registrar. As in other settlements, irreligious kibbutzim representatives tried to persuade the children to register for their kibbutzim.

Testimony of a Youth Aliyah Counselor in Youth Aliyah's Own Journal

The following excerpts are taken from an article, written by a **madrish** (counselor) at a Youth Aliyah children's home, which appeared in the April, 1955 issue of **Dapim**, the official pedagogical journal of Youth Aliyah.

The clash between the educators and their charges was first manifested with the arrival of the children from the Oriental communities -- Yemen, Iraq, North Africa. Though the echoes of this clash may not always reach the outside world, it is reflected in the eyes of these children which reveal dissatisfaction, lack of trust, disinterest, hostility and suspicion toward their tutors. These children do not know how to express their doubts aloud, nor do their parents. However, if we observe them, it becomes clear to us beyond any doubt that our way of life does not reflect

their beliefs and yearnings.

As the children grow up in our midst, the danger of a complete moral breakdown grows in direct proportion to the extent to which they are estranged from parental ties and influence.

Quite often we tread upon their most sacred sensitivities, though surely not intentionally. When a young girl approaches me for permission to transfer to a different institution because "I am religious", and continues most apologetically, "I can't bear to see such things as the slaughtering of chickens done openly by one who is not a *schochet* (religious slaughterer)", then I know we have trampled on that which is most dear to her.

Or if we choose *kashrut* as an illustration -- and amongst ourselves we should be frank -- is it not an affront to these children who are accustomed to the strictest observance of *kashrut*? And it is a fact that there is no semblance of *kashrut* in even one of our institutions.

Doesn't the smoking in public on the Sabbath serve to frustrate both our efforts to reach the child and his desire to become closer to us? What reason is there for the other actions which lend a discordant note to the general atmosphere so important in an educational settlement? Why do we allow our youth to go out and work on the Sabbath to benefit the cooperative treasury?

Or, to take yet another illustration: On Rosh Hashana Eve, one institution conducted a wonderful evening of readings and prayer and then dedicated the following morning to a sports contest! Or the "Mosad" that conducts a beautiful *Kabalat Shabbat*

and then has one of the girls kindle the Sabbath candles and recite the blessings *after* they all sit down to eat. And many more instances that convert our educational program into a farce and reveal a complete lack of understanding of the problems of this generation.

All of these 'minor' incidents inflict serious damage on the child. The very separation of a child from his family -- even when his family is in our land -- creates a serious disturbance and unbalance, and even more so when the parents are not in Israel. How much greater the shock when we continue to subject this poor weak soul to the shock of strange habits and ways of life that appear to him to be cardinal sins!

A former Youth Aliyah ward testified about the situation in Aliyat Hanoar. His revelations are included in the P'yelim report, *Meihamisrachaish B'yeshuvei Haolim*, issue 1.

"I, Mordecai, son of Moshe Balaloh, 17 years old, left Meknes in the summer of 1954 with the 'Tzeirah' group. When we arrived in Israel, they took us to Shaar HaAliyah, and from there to Gadna (Military Training) at Ein Zeitim near Safed. There we said daily prayers, made blessings, and kiddush over wine on the Sabbath. But even there the *madrichim* used to laugh at our piety. At the conclusion of our training, a man arrived from the Jewish Agency, for the purpose of sending the boys to certain settlements.

"We all pleaded with our commander that we were religious and wanted to be sent to religious places. His answer was that we must go where the Agency sent us. When we asked the Jewish Agency man for religious placement, he answered that the Agency does not provide religious places, and we must go to an irreligious place. Left without a choice, we went where they sent us.

"They brought our group of 40 boys to Kibbutz Gabriner. When we discovered that they eat **trefah** food including pork, that they raise pigs, and that they cook on the Sabbath, those of us who had relatives in Israel began to leave the kibbutz. But we Moroccans who had no relatives had no choice but to remain in the kibbutz. Many of us avoided eating pork and the other **trefah** food by starving ourselves.

"More than once, I pleaded with the Jewish Agency that they transfer me to a religious place, as I could not bear all this. They used to answer, 'My dear, you must know that here in the Jewish Agency we do not arrange for placement in religious settlements; here we are all irreligious.' Our **madrich**, Mailich, used to threaten us saying he would make our lives miserable if we didn't listen to him. Whenever we mentioned that we wanted to leave the kibbutz, he would say that he would ruin our lives and find us wherever we might be; we were afraid of him. Naturally, we were not able to turn to him for our religious needs. In the course of time, many of the boys got used to the life in the kibbutz and deserted the religion of their fathers, but even they did not eat pork.

"In many cases even now the children refuse to work on Yom Kippur, sometimes even on Sabbath. As to myself, I saw no possibility of leaving the kibbutz, until I thought of enlisting in the army. I took that step as the only way out of the kibbutz which had embittered my life, and now I hope, G-d willing, to return to the Jewish religion."

Cheshvan 18, 5715
November 2, 1955

"Mordecai Balaloh"

CHAPTER IV

Disappearance of Yemenite Children

Another disturbing occurrence, in addition to the anti-religious campaign, was the number of 'deaths' among the camp children. Of course, many of the infants and toddlers had arrived in the Holy Land in poor health, dehydrated and malnourished. They were taken to nurseries or infant hospitals for treatment. Many of these children died and were buried in children's plots. But many others were given to childless Israeli couples or possibly sold. The parents of the children were told they had died, but many were never shown the bodies or the burial sites. Sixteen years later, the parents were sent draft notices by the Israeli government for their 'dead' children which led to a governmental investigation. What resulted was a mild shaking of the head on the part of the investigative commission, which stated that although there were instances of children being stolen from their parents, due to the large number of immigrants at the time it was understandable that such 'errors' might occur.

Afikim, a Yemenite Jewish newspaper, published on June 1, 1966 a lengthy article on the "Violation of Human Rights in Israel", which is excerpted below. This article and other newspaper accounts help to focus public attention on the shocking things which had occurred in the immigrant camps during the mass aliyah.

Violation of Human Rights in Israel

The right of parents to bring up their son or daughter, to love them and inculcate in them the name and heritage of their parents as a link in the chain of generations, is a basic human right, a natural one we share with all human beings. The right of children to nurse from their mothers, to find security in their parents and to be provided for on their road to life and happiness is also a basic human right. The

respect for these rights is the criterion for measuring quality in a society. When these rights are ignored, men must cry out and protest.

We are afraid of a logical and moral analysis of the attitude of Israeli society and Israeli institutions to this very day regarding the mysterious disappearance of the children of Yemenite immigrants, but we are obligated to declare war and fight for the rectification of this injustice.

From the beginning of the Yemenite immigration to Israel in 1949, throughout the last seventeen years, many parents from this group of immigrants complained that during their stay in the immigrant camps between 1949-1953, some of their children disappeared or were kidnapped. The children were handed over to strangers, and some, most certainly, ended up in different countries. The parents who "lost" their children have had no peace or respite in their efforts to locate their little ones who were cruelly torn away from them.

For seventeen years, Israel, its institutions and society, have been deaf to the cries of the mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters who demand that this barbaric injustice be repaired. During that entire time, those parents were not still. They ran from office to office, personality to personality, newspaper to newspaper; and everywhere they met with silence and cover-ups. At times, a hint of something filtered out to the public, but the people were not upset when faced with the possibility that such unhuman and barbaric crimes had occurred in the state.

And we too, among the rest of the citizens of Israel, were silent. There are those who remained

silent because they heard nothing of this; and there are many who were silent because they could not believe that things such as these could happen in a nation of people who had been victims of barbarity throughout their history. Until now, these rumors were not sufficient to make us aware of the problem in a compelling and tangible manner. There were many who were glad to quiet their consciences by saying these were rumors with no basis, rumors fed by the hurt of parents whose children had died and were not able to accept this.

Seventeen years have passed since the first complaints of disappearances of Yemenite children. Today the facts have been compiled and they form a horrible picture. We know today details of sixty boys and girls who disappeared or were hidden during that period. According to the facts, we can deduce that without any doubt the number of these unfortunate children exceeds 100. Many of these children were still nurslings at the time of their kidnappings. Others were five or six years old. Many were the only children of their parents and some were stolen along with their siblings. Many were the parents whose hearts were broken, and many the mother whose health was debilitated. Some were hospitalized, broken in body and spirit, with illnesses of depression.

The cruel picture shows us how, during seventeen years, the state institutions failed to investigate the complaints of the parents. There is documented evidence that personalities and leaders, organizations and institutions knew of the occurrences and were silent.

These children were stolen from camps where only people with a special permit were allowed entry as attested to by a member of parliament, the late Zehariā Gluska. They were stolen from nurseries under the constant supervision of nurses and social workers. They were stolen from the tents and huts of their parents. And for seventeen years, no person in this country has found a basis for investigating where the children disappeared.

There were parents who, when they searched for their children, were told matter of factly that they died. We are prepared to allow that among scores of children some of them died, but we must express several puzzlements.

1. Many of these children were healthy when they disappeared and their 'death' is suspicious.
2. If they did indeed die, why couldn't the institutions present certificates of death?
3. Why didn't the directors of these institutions notify the parents of the death of their son or daughter? These institutions knew the addresses of every family.
4. Why weren't the bodies given to the parents for burial and mourning?
5. Why couldn't the institutions and their officers point out the graves of these children that died?

We will not add any further questions for fear that certain people will forge documents and cover up evidence if they have not already done so. But we wish to point out several facts which make it impossible to doubt that something criminal occurred.

- 1) There is reliable evidence from quotes of officials and workers who were in the camps at the time which

makes it clear that the children did not die.

2) In several cases, the Yemenite families succeeded in locating their children with other families. But these kidnappers refused to return the children and apparently smuggled them out of the country.

3) Many parents are receiving lately a draft notice for the son that disappeared. In one or two cases, we can assume that this comes from an error; but when this happens over and over again one can say that these children did not die.

If we, the citizens of Israel, were silent because we did not know many details of the incidents and had no actual picture of this affair, why did all those personalities and leaders who knew very well the seriousness and scope of what was happening remain silent? Why didn't government departments immediately investigate the parents' complaints, especially since they had a legal and moral obligation to do so?

The answer to this, which we have today, is very logical. We now know without any doubt that the kidnapping and disappearance of these children were not coincidences or individual activities of people whose need for a child had distorted their sanity. The facts known to us testify that these were planned actions which came from a central organization. This was an organized and efficient effort of an organization which saw to it that everything went smoothly: permission from the central organization; instructions to workers in camps; talking the parents into giving over their children (even healthy ones) to nurseries; organizing visits of women who would choose children for themselves; organizing the

transfer of the child to be kidnapped; handling the shaken parents and deceiving them; covering up the crime.

The large numbers of kidnapped children, their kidnappings from different camps, the clear-cut methods accompanied by identical arguments and explanations and similar methods of coverups -- all these point to an organized and intentional action. All this testifies that the crime was committed by an influential and capable organization which succeeded in getting the approval of government organizations to convince people working in the camps to participate directly, or at least to be silent and silence others.

There is reason to suspect that, in this crime, which violates the human rights of Israeli citizens, there are personalities and organizations (not just Israeli ones) involved, some who participated directly in carrying out the crime, and some who naively are helping after the deed is done.

In this eighteenth year of the State, we are stating sorrowfully several possible facts which a short while ago we would not have been able to believe.

- 1) There is enough evidence to indicate that a crime was committed in which tens of children were stolen from their parents and given (or perhaps sold) to strangers.
- 2) Today, we believe that these incidences most probably occurred in Israel.
- 3) We believe that it is very possible that these deeds were committed by Jews against their brothers.

This terrible episode will arouse questions that have been asked before in the Dreyfus affair or that of

the "concubine of Givah". But we want to clarify that this is a moral human question which, when dealt with, will have much influence on our national life in various areas. This is a question on which no one can remain neutral: for from the moment that suspicion of this transgression in our society is brought to our attention, we are obligated to condemn and demand reparation of the injustice. In questions such as these, there is no neutrality or standing on the side. In questions such as these, standing on the side means condoning barbarism and anti-humanism, and we do not believe that Israeli society can allow itself the "luxury" of such manifestations in its midst.

Besides the general humanitarian aspects of the problem, there are also the religious and moral implications. The anonymity of the kidnapped children will cause suspicion of illicit marriages and illegitimacy in the state of Israel.

We are not just lamenting the silence and silencing of the past, but we are joining the "bereaved" parents and "orphaned" children in a cry to the state of Israel to rectify the terrible injustice done and still being done. There is no room for forgetting because this crime of the kidnapping of children occurs daily, over and over. Every tear of a mother who has been bereaved by Jewish brothers, every sigh from the heart of an orphaned child compounds the crime again and again.

We know the humiliation that the state of Israel would suffer if this became known outside, yet we as citizens of Israel are making our position clear: We are prepared to understand that people devoid of conscience and culture took advantage of the chaos to

commit crimes. We understand that the fact that important people and large organizations were involved with this makes any action difficult. It is our goal to convince agencies in the state of Israel that it is their moral obligation to investigate the episode of kidnapped children and work to rectify this injustice. We know that in these organizations there is influence of certain factors which are suspect in connection with legal and public responsibility. We are prepared to consider these pressures on the government by declaring that, as citizens of Israel, we are relinquishing our right to demand punishment of those responsible and we will accept rectification of this wrong and return of the children to their parents. This is the only compromise we can make with our conscience, by suggesting that the findings of the committee be secret and intended only for the return of the children.

We are turning to the Parliament of Israel to appoint an investigating committee which will work quietly and secretly to investigate the complaints of parents about missing children. This committee will investigate every case, and will have the authority to open the files of certain government agencies and different organizations and to gather testimony. The purpose of this investigation will be to determine whether the child in question is dead or alive. This committee will be comprised of representatives of the parents and the public so as to prevent turning the committee into an instrument of distortion and cover-up.

Determining the death of one of the children must be based on convincing evidence. Determining that a child is alive must be accompanied by establishing

where he is and returning the right to determine his fate to his natural parents. If his parents will agree that he continue to live with those who took him in, this is their privilege and they will act according to their conscience and understanding.

These unfortunate children, who are today teenagers, have the right to know that their parents are alive and love them, and to know that those who claim to be their parents are strangers, some of whom did illegal things.

Let no one fool themselves into thinking that one can evade this painful issue. Pushing aside the issue with intent to silence the entire affair means concealing crimes against humanity and the Jewish people. It means moral suicide for Israel's society, for it will make its moral policy one of hypocrisy and subjectivity; a policy which says "this value applies only to certain people."

This is a trial and test for Israel as a cultured nation and a moral one. Will she withstand it?

Yosef Zuritel wrote an article for *Maariv* of April 4, 1966, which contained the following case histories of missing Yemenite children, pointing out the anguish of the parents who did not know what had happened to their children.



They claim to represent dozens of families whose children were taken from them in immigrant camps in the early years of the State, and all trace has been lost of them till this very day.

by Yosef Zurriel

"We came to the immigrant camp, Ein Shemer. It was 12 midnight. This was sixteen years ago. We dragged along with us some packages that we had brought along from Yemen, and I was holding my little baby Shoshana in my hand. She was one-year old. They wrote down our names and then we were taken to a tent. An hour later, a nurse came and said that I should give her the girl. I asked, why. She said, 'You are not allowed to keep a baby in the tent.' I said, 'Okay, but you have to let me nurse her.' The nurse agreed. The next morning I went to nurse her; I continued doing so for the next few days. One day I came, the nurse looks at me and says: 'The baby died.' I asked when. She said, 'At night.' 'And where is she?' She replied, 'I don't know. It is none of my business to take care of that.' I asked where they buried her, and again she said she doesn't know, and I should go to the camp office.

"I went to the office with my husband. They didn't know anything. We returned to the tent, and my husband went to see the Rabbi to ask him whether we are obligated to mourn Shoshana. I sat at the tent crying for my little girl. My husband came back and said that we are not to sit shiva until we see that she is dead. Three weeks passed. Every day, I went to the infants home, and begged the nurses to tell me what happened to my little girl. They never knew anything. One afternoon, one of the nurses said, 'Your daughter didn't die, she is in Pardes Chana.' I almost passed out. I asked her, 'Where exactly is she?' She said she did not know, but that she heard so from somebody. I wanted to travel to Pardes Chana to find my daughter. Another nurse came to me, and said, 'Shoshana is not in Pardes Chana, but she is in a convalescent home in Hadera.' My blood began pounding in my head. I had no idea what to do.

"I have not found Shoshana till this very day. Three years ago, my older daughter met a nurse who had worked in the immigrant camp of Ein Shemer. She asked how we are doing, and all other kinds of questions and finally asked, 'What happened with Shoshana?' My daughter said that nobody knows, and that they told her that she had died. The nurse simply smiled and said, 'It would be worth your while to investigate what really happened to her, and she disappeared quickly.'

This is the story of Mrs. Merchavi of Moshav Tarom. She is a woman of about 55, whose world was destroyed 16 years ago. All the sorrow of the world can be seen in her eyes. Worst of all is the question mark that till this very day hovers over her face: the mysterious disappearance of her one-year-old daughter. This mother was denied the privilege of going to visit her daughter's grave and of eulogizing her.

We are being told it is both natural and normal that under the conditions of Mass Aliyah of the years 1949-1951 there would have been a lack of organization. They explained to us that the limited manpower which was available to the absorption authorities at the time made it impossible to take care of this mass of people. They are trying to make us understand it would be better for all concerned if this painful affair were left alone. Let it remain buried under the dust of the years. Do not reopen wounds that have already healed.

The situation is absolutely otherwise. The wounds of the parents have never healed. They never accepted the situation, and they are entitled to know what happened to their children. Over the past years, two children who had been lost were discovered in the homes of different families. Hope has again been stirred up in the hearts of other parents that the time has come for them to see their children, alive again. Even the Ministry of Welfare, which is responsible for the adoption of children in Israel, has now decided to remove the cover of secrecy from this hidden affair and to open the adoption books so as to find the children of the Yemenites who were handed

over for adoption from the beginning of the Aliyah in 1949 until recent years.

A variety of versions are heard concerning the number of parents and families who do not know exactly what happened with their children. Some say there are 100, some say 50. We know of 12 families in whose homes we have visited, and from whose mouths we heard stories that will make your hair stand on end.

The tragedy of these parents has not yet ended. Sixteen, 17 years of nightmares and endless tossings between peaks of new hopes and depths of horrible disillusionment; of a never-ending supply of stories about the fate of the children; of running back and forth between one office and another; from one member of the Knesset to another; from one social worker to another - all of these have ruined the lives of these unfortunate families. They have created islands of spiritual disturbance; they have created tensions for the other children; they have denied these families normal development.

In the Ministry of Welfare and in the Jewish Agency, they inform us that they have received very few requests to trace lost children. This does not matter. So long as even one single family is suffering because of these horrible doubts, it is forbidden to allow this issue to be forgotten.

"We arrived at the camp in Rosh HoAyin, close to Rosh HaShona," relates Mr. Chaim Zuar, of Jerusalem. "We went through the physical examinations, and received certain papers, then I was called to the office and told that I must place my daughter Yehudis in the infants home. That's the way it's done, they said. I refused, but they were stronger than I was. They told me that if I would not give the child over I would not receive any household goods. I wasn't interested; I was willing to forego receiving anything so I remained with my family in the street. But you can do this for only one night. The next day I went to the office and said, I am willing to hand over the child, but you must allow her mother to visit every day. They consented. Every day my wife went to visit her. One day they told her, 'The child has been taken to the

hospital.' We asked, 'Where?' They said, 'Not too far away.' We believed them. Next day, we went again. We requested to visit her, they replied, 'Not now, tomorrow.' They did not allow us to visit her until a fellow came to us one day, a man named Shmuel Badichi, one of the directors at the camp, and said, 'You will be transferred to the transit camp at Talpiyot, Jerusalem.' I said, 'Fine, we are going; but what about the girl?' He said, 'The girl is well, don't worry. Travel in peace to Jerusalem and I'll bring her to you in a special taxi. We went. To this very day, we have seen no "taxi", no Shmuel Badichi, no girl. We went to find out what happened to her. They told us she died. I do not believe them. I will never in my life believe them. What a fate! And look! Two months ago, we received a draft notice for the girl.'

At the end of 1949, the Nadaf family arrived in the immigrant camp Ein Shemer. The mother held Shimon, who was aged 7 months, in her arms. The boy was taken to the infants home together with all the other children. When it came time for the family to be transferred to a Moshav, they were told that their son had died. The family believed this. A short time after the family arrived in a Moshav near Jerusalem, Mrs. Nadaf gave birth to another son. The child did not live long. He died from an illness at the age of 3 months. He was buried in the Moshav without a permit. This is against the law. The parents were asked by the police to explain their actions. While they were still in the midst of the confusion over this matter, a policeman arrived in the Moshav, carrying with him a thick file. He asked, "You buried this child without a burial permit, but where is your first son, Shimon?" In a state of shock, the mother replied, "He died in Ein Shemer." This representative of the law, invited the mother to accompany him to the police station.

At the police station, she was told that her first child, Shimon, was apparently alive. As soon as she overcame the shock, she asked to see him, but the police were in no hurry. They told her that it's quite possible that her lost son is in the hands of a family in the Beth HaKeren section of Jerusalem.

For two months, they dragged her back and forth with, "Come back tomorrow." Finally, she had no strength. All she had was the hope that they might allow her to see her child, and that was all that kept her alive. After these two months the police sang a different tune: "It is not your child," they told the parents.

Yehuda, son of the Tanami family of Gedera is considered by the army AWOL. His parents have received notification from the draft board that if Yehuda does not show up immediately to be drafted, he will be taken to court. Here is the mother's story:

"We placed Yehuda in the infants home at the Rosh HoAyin immigrant camp when he was 3-months old. Everyday I would go there to nurse him. One day I went there early. A man who was cleaning told me to wait outside. I stood outside the window. Two women were standing next to my Yehuda's bed and they were fighting. Each one said, This one is for me! Afterwards they spoke in some strange language. I went to the other side: I heard two nurses speaking. One of them said, 'So what? She's got a lot of children.' The second one said, 'Yes, but you are not allowed to do that.' I felt my heart burning up. I rushed into the home, and one of the nurses said to me, 'Yehuda died.' I started to cry; I demanded to see the child, dead or alive. The nurse said to me, 'Go to the office. The child is there.' I went. He was not there. I went to the tent to tell my husband, and on the way I heard them announcing on a loudspeaker that I was to come immediately, that my son did not die. I ran to the office. There was a man named Ozeri, who was in charge of the files and he said to me, 'I want you to know that your child did not die. I am responsible for burials, go look for him.' I looked and looked, and I couldn't find the child. We were as blind people in a new country. There was no one to talk to, no one to listen to us. We screamed, we cried, we begged: Nothing."

Absolutely identical are the stories of the Chashash family of Kiryat Ono, the Abdar family of Moshav Oran, and other families. The only difference is in the names of the children.

The tragedy of each family is exactly the same.

We went to the honorable gentlemen, Yosef Ramati, Chaim Tzadok and Yisrael Yeshayahu. The first, as the agent of the Jewish Agency in the immigrant camp of Rosh HoAyin, the second as responsible for the absorption of Yemenite immigrants during those years, and the third as the central address for all matters concerning this Mass Aliyah.

Yosef Ramati said, "In the years 1949-1952, there was a clinic at Rosh HoAyin operated by the Ministry of Health, Hadasah Hospital and Kupat Cholim. There were many children there who, for reasons of health and hygiene, it was impossible to leave in the tents and in the huts."

Do you have any idea why the children disappeared?

"Yes, because their names were registered incorrectly."

Do you know of instances where families without children came to the immigrant camps seeking to adopt children of immigrants?

"Yes."

Is it possible that children were taken from the hospital without permission?

"Definitely possible."

Were the nurses in the clinic subject to the discipline of the directors of the camp.

"No."

Do you credit the story of Mrs. Tanami?

"Yes, I do."

Is there any truth in the story that workers at the camp received money in order to hand over the children to families without children?

"There is not an iota of truth in these stories. The workers, without any exception, were honest. To the degree that there were errors, that was because of lack of clear administrative procedures."

Chaim Tadok, who was at the time responsible for the absorption of the "Magic Carpet" immigrants, and who is today assistant director of the Absorption Department of the Jewish Agency, (today he is the Minister of "Justice" in the Zionist State, *Ed.*) cannot conceive of the possibility that a nurse would accept money in order to hand over a child for adoption. Nevertheless, he notes that in recent years a number of parents have turned to him requesting aid in locating their children who disappeared at that time from the immigrant camp. However, lacking details, and lacking an organized registration, he was unable to help them. As far as the problem itself is concerned, he explains, "In those days there were immigrant camps in Beit Lid, Ein Shemer and Rosh HoAyin. There was an administrative unit which dealt with the absorption of the immigrants and taking them out of the camps to a variety of settlement centers. There was also a unit that dealt with the medical and hygienic details for the new immigrants. This second unit which functionally belonged to the Ministry of Health, was a territory unto itself. It decided whom to transfer to a hospital and whom to return from a hospital. Two public organizations aided this unit: the Organization of Working Mothers and WIZO.

"The distinction of territory between the absorption and the physical and medical aid does not mean that the representatives of the Jewish Agency in the camp did not participate in consultations. It does not mean that children were kidnapped from the camps with the participation of Jewish Agency workers. I, personally, do not know of a single instance of a child disappearing through illegal or immoral or unethical means. Nor do I know of a single complaint filed against any public or private nurse in any one of the immigrant camps. This does not mean that such a thing could not have happened. I know a number of instances that were brought to the attention of the police, but after they had investigated and found no way out, they stopped the investigation."

Assistant Speaker of the Knesset, Yisrael Yeshayahu, points out that on the basis of general information in his possession,

he believes that children were indeed taken without the knowledge of their parents in order to be handed over to families without children. Nevertheless he notes, "I am amazed at the neglect that all of us have uncovered in this painful affair, ever since the first reports in 1950 until the present time. I would, therefore, propose, in view of the present revelations, that a public commission be established to examine this affair in all of its aspects and that the parents should be informed once and for all, whether their children are alive or dead. No doubt there are people who will oppose this proposal. Nevertheless, this is the sole procedure that will lead to a solution of this tragic affair, which until this day has destroyed the lives of dozens of families in Israel."

To complete the picture, we interviewed Advocate Amram Blum, legal adviser to the Ministry of Welfare. He says, "We know of families that have children that are not theirs, and do not have an adoption order. In such instances, either we provide legalization or we take the child away. Insofar as the Yemenite children who disappeared from the immigrant camps are concerned, I can only say the following: The number of unnamed children given over to families without children and to other families in the years of 1949-1952 does not, in my opinion exceed 10. In the last year, I dealt with one instance of a Yemenite child who was adopted by a certain family. We have not yet completed our handling of this case.

"It is my opinion that many of the children who disappeared at that time died without the knowledge of the parents and understandably without any formal registration. Whether it is this way or otherwise, we have decided at present to aid those parents who do not know what happened to their children. It is my intention to request the Attorney General's permission to open the adoption ledgers and through them to trace children without names who were handed over for adoption. This study is likely to take several months. Therefore, parents who do not know what happened with their children and wish to know whether they are alive in Israel and in the hands of families living in Israel, will have to give us in writing all the details

bewilderment, and for a long time they seemed to be floating in the air, unable to find themselves in the confusion of the new and necessary arrangements. At every step they took, they needed direction and the advice of the people who worked in the camps. Through these stages of resettlement in the Holy Land, they were absolutely dependent upon them.

The objective conditions of the absorption of the Yemeni immigrants were extremely difficult. Not only did they have to acclimate themselves to an entirely new situation, but the very concentration of thousands of immigrants of all ages - old and young, men, women and children -- in such a short time in immigrant camps created organizational and administrative problems of major difficulty.¹

Add to this difficulties of communication, language difficulties, difficulties of understanding basic concepts, and one can see how far misunderstanding can extend. Here one must remember that these immigrants arrived in Palestine for the most part sick and starving. The infants especially were suffering from serious malnutrition and in many instances from serious illnesses, so that there was an immediate need to transfer the sick children to homes for infants and even to hospitals.

Moreover, it happened more than once that parents were transferred, in the course of their absorption, from one camp to another and sometimes

1. Here the Commission is laying the groundwork for the apologia stated in the report's conclusion, i.e., that it is understandable that some children were lost due to the sheer size of the immigration.

Investigative Commission to Discover the Yemenite Children

Once the story of the missing Yemenite children became public knowledge, the outcry was so great that the Israeli government was forced to appoint a commission in 1966 to investigate the matter. The Investigative Commission to Discover the Yemenite Children consisted of only two members: Y. Bahalul, District Attorney of Haifa and the North, and R. Minkowsky, Captain of the National Staff of the Israeli Police. Their report, which was not issued until March 1968, is excerpted below.

The Yemenites believed that their immigration to the Holy Land signaled the time of the redemption:

As soon as the "wings of the eagle" were spread, the naive Yemenites believed that their dreams were coming true. They regarded the airplanes as part of the miracle of redemption taking place before their very eyes. And they imagined that this was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies of redemption, and that they themselves were now playing a role in the redemption.

Small wonder that when they landed in the Holy Land and found themselves surrounded by people who received and guided them, they were convinced that these people were the emissaries of the Messiah. In the eyes of the Yemeni Jews, the agents of the Jewish Agency were part of the wonder, part of the miracle of redemption, and they therefore respected and trusted them boundlessly.

In the Holy Land, the immigrants found themselves in a brand new and absolutely strange situation. From the Middle Ages they were suddenly brought into the 20th century. The shock of the transition left the immigrants in a state of

from a camp to a permanent settlement. Occasionally, this meant being transferred from the northern part of the country to the southern part or vice versa. It is no wonder that at times parents were no longer in the place they had been when their children were returned.

We may not ignore the fact that the registry of the names and the listing of the Yemenite immigrants, especially in the early months of their aliyah, provided a special problem. It frequently happened that names were confused, that one name was written into an immigration certificate while another name was registered at the absorption camp, and a third name registered in an infant home or in the hospital.

It is, therefore, no wonder that a large number of children of Yemeni immigrants have been lost and no trace found of them, and that their parents have no idea where they are. For a period of seventeen years, from 1949-1966, the mystery of the disappearing children remained a mystery. The number of missing children was unclear. Some said ten, some said fifty, some said one hundred. But no one imagined that the real number was in the hundreds. In places where many Yemenite immigrants were concentrated, such as Jerusalem, Ramat Gan, Rosh HoAyin and Kiryat Ono, people knew of many cases, yet no one knew exactly how many actually existed.

In 1966, the parents' suspicion that their children were alive increased. That year a large number of them received draft notices for their missing children, and the affair took on a serious dimension. It was important that someone aid the parents in solving the shocking mystery, once and for all, to release them from their trauma. Two citizens of Kiryat Ono, Tov Zadok and Chaim Amrani, decided to place

themselves at the disposal of the parents and to do whatever was in their power so that the parents would receive a reply to the question, "What happened to my child?"

At exactly that time, Yosef Zuriel's article in Ma'ariv of April 1, 1966 headlined "Twelve Mothers Seek Their Children" was published and that gave a second push for the recognition of the need to solve the mystery. That article related the stories of several couples who lost their children at that time, and the writer mentioned that he knew of twelve similar instances.

In that way, the affair for the first time came to public notice. It aroused hopes in the hearts of the masses of parents seeking their children, and made it necessary to have the affair investigated by a public body that would deal with the affair in all of its ramifications, so that the parents would finally know whether their children were alive or dead.

This development helped the activities of Tov Zadok and Chaim Amrani. They organized a mass meeting at which they founded the Committee for Discovering the Missing Children of Yemenite Immigrants. The Committee began to take testimony from the parents of the missing children. A questionnaire was distributed among the parents by members of the Committee who travelled from town to town. At the same time, posters were publicized in all the synagogues attended by the Yemenites in which the members of the community were called upon to be fully alert regarding the problem which was of concern to the entire public, to gather testimony and to assist the Committee in its struggle to remove the veil of secrecy.

For these purposes, meeting were held with reporters and public figures. Public meetings were also held in various parts of the country. The Public Committee for Discovering the Missing Children of Yemenite Immigrants entered upon a correspondence with governmental and parliamentary factors, with the goal of finally establishing an investigative commission.

Upon receiving the complaints and putting together the historical material, the staff of investigators and their supervisors collected testimony from every one of 339 complainants, and opened a file for each complaint. Simultaneously, the Investigative Commission's staff alphabetically indexed the names of all the Yemenite children that appeared in every archive collected by the Commission. This extremely difficult labor took a number of months, because the Commission felt that this was the key to the success of its efforts. The staff ultimately indexed some twenty-thousand names and compared those with the list of children about whom the Commission had received complaints.

It is noteworthy that during the work of the Commission it opened another fifty-two files in which were collected all sorts of information from many sources, anonymous as well as known, relating information about the disappearance of Yemenite children. This information came from all over the land. The Investigative Commission's staff examined every single piece of information it received (even if on the surface it seemed to be unfounded).

The gathering of the material was extremely difficult, primarily because of difficulties caused by time. The vast majority of the complaints dated back to the 1950's, approximately eighteen years. Besides

the institutions in which the Yemenite immigrants had stayed had in the meanwhile ceased to exist and their archives, to some degree, were missing because they were transferred to other locations.

The Investigative Commission dealt with 339 complaints related to the disappearance of 342 children. There were an additional seventeen complaints about the disappearance of children in the Hashad camp which was established on the Arabian Peninsula near the city of Aden. Since, however, there was no technical possibility of investigating them, we did not investigate those complaints.

Because of the importance of this investigation, and in accord with our terms of appointment, the Commission finds it necessary to detail in this record its finding about every single child about whom a complaint was filed.

Below is a detailed list of all the children who disappeared. This detailed list lends itself to the following summation: The number of children who disappeared, according to the complaints, is 342. The children known to have died are 316; children known to be alive - 4; children who have disappeared - 22; total - 342.

Here are some typical cases of children who were buried, and whose graves were supposedly found by the Commission seven years after the parents had consistently requested to know the whereabouts of their children.

Rachel, daughter of Mauda Cohen

The Complaint: In 1967, the father of the missing girl filed a complaint that his daughter Rachel, aged six months, had disappeared in 1949 from the infant home at Rosh HoAyin camp.

The Investigation:

1. The Cohen family arrived from Yemen on September 29,

parents came to Israel. On March 5, 1950, he was hospitalized in the DeJani Hospital and died there of an infection.

2. Medical file no. 874150 at the DeJani Hospital verifies these details.
3. Death certificate no. 113 of April 15, 1950 verifies these facts. Salam was buried in the cemetery at Kiryat Shaul in the children's division, section 1, row 1, grave no. 22 on March 1, 1950, according to burial permit no. 03112.
4. **The mother was notified of her son's death, but did not see the body.**

Shoshana bas Moussa Vehav

The Complaint: In 1967, the father of the missing person complained that his two-month-old daughter disappeared in 1950 from the DeJani Hospital in Jaffa.

The Investigation:

1. The Vehav family came to Israel on January 1, 1950, according to immigration certificate no. 7107, and was placed in the camp Ein-Shemer Gimel. On August 27, 1950, Shoshana was hospitalized in the DeJani Hospital in Jaffa and died there of blood poisoning.
2. Medical file no. 3172150 of the DeJani Hospital verifies these details.
3. Death certificate no. 360 of August 30, 1950 verifies these details. The girl, Shoshana, was buried in the cemetery at Kiryat Shaul, children's division, section 1, row 5, no. 23 on September 9, 1950, according to burial permit no. 09832.
4. **The family was notified of her death, but did not see her body.**

Adina bas Menachem Tov

The Complaint: In 1967, the mother of the missing child complained that her six-month-old daughter disappeared in 1950 from the Hadassah Hospital in Tel Aviv.

1949, received immigrant certificate no. 53909, and was transferred to Rosh HoAyin Camp A. The child was taken to DeJani Hospital on September 29, 1949 and died on October 1, 1949 from blood poisoning.

2. Medical folder no. 1016-49 of the DeJani Hospital certifies the above details.
3. Death certificate no. 157 certified that Rachel was buried in the cemetery at Kiryat Shaul, section 1, row 5, no. 12 on October 1, 1949, in accord with burial permit no. 936.

Zion ben Yosef Avraham Saadya

The Complaint: In 1967, the boy's father complained that his four-month-old son had disappeared in 1949 from the Pardesia transit camp.

The Investigation:

1. The Saadya family arrived from Yemen on September 29, 1949, received immigrant certificate no. 54045, and was transferred to the Beit Lid camp. On September 30, 1949, Zion was admitted to the DeJani Hospital where he stayed until October 8, 1949, when he died of blood poisoning.
2. Medical folder no. 1016-49 of DeJani Hospital certifies the above details.
3. Death certificate no. 194 certifies that Zion Saadya was buried on October 9 at the Kiryat Shaul cemetery in the children's plot, section 1, row 8, grave 5, according to permit no. 304.

Salam ben Avraham Levi

The Complaint: In 1967, the mother of the missing person complained that her two-month-old son disappeared in 1950 from the DeJani Hospital in Jaffa.

The Investigation:

1. The Levi family came to Israel on November 8, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 55574, and was placed in the camp Rosh HoAyin Bet. Shalom was born two months after his

The Investigation:

1. The Tov family came to Israel from Aden on April 18, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 5568 and was placed in the Atlit immigration camp. Adina was born in the Hadassah Hospital in Tel Aviv on December 14, 1949 and died there on April 4, 1950 from an infection.
2. Medical file no. 17505149 of the Hadassah Hospital in Tel Aviv verifies these details.
3. Death certificate no. 724150 of April 9, 1950 verifies these details. Adina was buried at the cemetery in Kiryat Shaul on April 9, 1950 in the children's division, section 7, row 11, grave 72, according to burial permit no. 7343.
4. The family was notified of the girl's death, but was afraid to go to the hospital to verify the truth for fear they would be asked to pay for the burial.

Tzion ben Yechia Tulu

The Complaint: In 1967, the mother of the missing person complained that her 12-day-old son, Tzion, disappeared in 1950 from the DeJani Hospital in Jaffa.

The Investigation:

1. The Tulu family came to Israel from Yemen on October 24, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 52620, and was settled in the camp Rosh HoAyin Bet. Tzion was born in the DeJani Hospital on November 14, 1950. The mother left the hospital, and the baby remained for care. On January 1, 1951, the baby, who was born prematurely, died of a lung infection.
2. Medical file no. 4784150 of the DeJani Hospital confirms these details.
3. Death certificate no. 24 of January 1, 1951 confirms all these facts. Tzion was buried in the cemetery at Kiryat Shaul, children's division, row 8, no. 17 on January 21, 1951 according to burial permit no. 12711.

4. The mother received notice of her child's death, but did not see the body.

Mazal bas Yosef Gritti

The Complaint: In 1967, the father of the missing person complained that his daughter Mazal disappeared in 1949 from the hospital in Haifa.

The Investigation:

1. The Gritti family came to Israel in 1949 and was settled at the camp at Atlit. On June 11, 1949, Mazal was hospitalized at the Rothschild Hospital in Haifa and died there on July 8, 1949 of blood poisoning.
2. Medical file no. 661149 of the Rothschild Hospital verifies these details.
3. Death certificate no. 575149 of July 10, 1949 confirms these facts. Mazal was buried in the cemetery at Haifa in the children's section on July 10, 1949, according to burial permit no. 575149.
4. The family was notified of the child's death, but did not see her body and were not present at the burial.

Now we come to a number of complaints where the Commission admits no burial place was found, but they still consider the children dead.

Shalom ben David Jahachsi

The Complaint: In 1957, David Jahachsi complained that his son Shalom had disappeared in 1949 from the hospital in Pardes Chana.

The Investigation:

1. The Jahachsi family arrived from Yemen on December 14, 1949, received immigration certificate no. 58494, and was housed in the main Ein-Shemer Camp. The child was admitted to the Pardes Chana Hospital where he died on January 3, 1950 from blood poisoning and dehydration.

2. In the list of deaths at Pardes Chana Hospital, under no. 39 there is an entry which certifies the above details.
3. The burial place of the child was not located, since the children of Ein-Shemer Camps B, C, and D were buried in a section of the cemetery at Ein Iron -- Karkur, and the grave was unmarked.

Yosef ben David Jahachtsi

The Complaint: In 1957, the father complained that his son Yosef, aged one year, had disappeared in 1949, from the hospital in Pardes Chana.

The Investigation:

1. See details about his twin brother.
2. In the record of the Immigrant Medical Service, under no. 55, letter "yud", there is certification that Yosef was sent to the Pardes Chana Hospital and died, but no date is given.
3. His burial place has not been located, for the same reason given for his brother.

Salem, son of Salem Jamil

The Complaint: In 1967, Salem Jamil complained that his son Salem, aged two, had disappeared from an unknown hospital in 1949. According to his complaint, he was told that his son had died.

The Investigation:

1. The Jamil family arrived in Israel in 1949 and was housed in the Ein-Shemer camp. The investigation in this case foundered on difficulties because the medical archives of the Ein-Shemer camps and Pardes Chana were destroyed, so there was no way to find the boy Salem through camp medical documents. Despite this, after much detailed search, a man named Aricha was found to possess a register of those children who died in the Ein-Shemer camp and who were buried in the Karkur cemetery.

2. In this register, it is noted that on November 16, 1949, a boy named Salem ben Salem died. The Investigative Commission was not satisfied with that. After additional detailed searching, a medical file no. 192-50 was located in Rambam Hospital in Haifa, referring to Salem's brother, Suliman. In that file, we found a paper signed by Dr. Jaffe, doctor in the hospital of Ein-Shemer, dated November 24, 1949, written in German, certifying that Suliman's twin brother had died from general dehydration and lack of fluids.

3. In view of the two above documents, the Commission is convinced that the boy Salem died, even though no death certificate has been found and his burial place has not been located.

Rivka bas Levi Cohen

The Complaint: In 1967, the mother of the missing person complained that her twenty-day-old daughter disappeared in 1949 from the hospital at Beit Lid.

The Investigation:

1. The Cohen family came to Israel from Afghanistan on October 24, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 52718 and was housed in an immigrant camp in Netanya. The girl, Rivka, was born on March 22, 1950 and was hospitalized in the hospital Beit Lid on April 12, 1950. She died there that day of weakness and blood poisoning.
 2. A medical file at the Bet Lid Hospital verifies these details.
 3. **The girl's burial site was not located. The mother was notified of the child's death, but did not see the body.**
- Levi bas Moshe Chakimi**
- The Complaint:** In 1967, the mother of the missing person complained that her two-month-old daughter, Leah, disappeared in 1950. The hospital notified the parents of their daughter's death.

The Investigation:

1. The Chakimi family came to Israel from Afghanistan on March 25, 1949 and was settled in the camp Be'er Yaakov. On December 23, 1949, Leah was taken to the government hospital at Be'er Yaakov and died there on January 30, 1950 of sepsis.
2. In the register of patients in Be'er Yaakov Hospital under the no. 406, there is a list which confirms all this.
3. **The burial place was not located. One can guess that she was buried in the cemetery Be'er Yaakov, children's row.**

Aharon ben Yaakov Talabi

The Complaint: In 1967, the father of the missing child complained that his year-old son disappeared in 1950 from the hospital in Ein-Shemer. He was told by a camp official that his son died. The matter was also noted on the immigration certificate.

The Investigation:

1. The Talabi family came to Israel from Yemen on February 12, 1950, according to immigration certificate no. 3120, and was settled in Ein-Shemer Gimel. On July 16, 1950, the baby was hospitalized in the hospital at Ein-Shemer and died there on July 17, 1950 of dyspepsia and general weakness.
2. Medical file no. 1210 of the hospital Ein-Shemer confirms these details.
3. **The burial place was not disclosed.**

Saada bas Menachem Saadya

The Complaint: In 1967, the mother complained that her five-month-old daughter Saada disappeared in 1950 from the Ein-Shemer Hospital. The parents were told and even received a note that their daughter died.

The Investigation:

1. The Saadya family came to Israel from Yemen on

November 28, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 57319 and was settled in the camp at Ein-Shemer. On May 7, 1950 the girl was hospitalized at Ein-Shemer and died the same day.

2. Registrar no. 878150 on the admission register of the hospital at Ein Shemer confirms these details.
3. The burial place was not located because the archives of the Ein Shemer camps -- Aleph, Bet, Gimel -- were destroyed.

Nissim, son of Salem Ramady Wahab

The Complaint: In 1967, the mother complained that her son Nissim, aged two months, had disappeared in 1951 from the infant home in Ein-Shemer. The parents were told that their son had died, but they refused to believe that. They never saw his body and do not know where he is buried.

The Investigation:

1. The Ramady family arrived from Yemen on January 26, 1950, was given immigration certificate no. 7658, and was housed in Ein-Shemer camp. On January 30, 1951, Nissim was hospitalized in Ein-Shemer, where he died on March 15th from dehydration.
 2. Medical file no. 7658-119-51 of the hospital in Ein-Shemer certifies the above details.
 3. His burial place was not located, since the archives of the Ein-Shemer camps B, C and D were destroyed.
- The Committee has proof that in spite of the many attempts at the time to cure these children mentioned above, a large number of them died, since their physical condition was very severe. Its conclusion is, then, that although the number of deaths - 316 children - may seem relatively large in relation to the number of complaints, taking into consideration the large number of Yemenite children who came to Israel, and the fact that many were in poor physical condition, this is not a surprising number.

In this matter, the Committee remained with a question which bothered them from the very start. Some of the complaints filed by the parents said that they were told of the child's death, but could not believe it since the body was not given to them. In another portion of complaints, the parents note that the child disappeared and they were not told that he died. The Committee's investigation revealed that, at that time, the institution that had the children informed the parents directly or the camp directors of the death of an inhabitant of the camp.

The Committee was convinced by proof that because of mistaken names, population changes and camp closings, there were occurrences where the parents did not receive news of the death or it was impossible to give it to them.

As a result, the child was sometimes buried under the wrong name without the parents' knowledge or presence. There were instances when, because of finances or other problems, the parents did not go to the hospital to receive their child's body for burial.

On the other hand, we can now conclude, in light of the investigation's findings, that the majority of the parents of missing children presented their complaints sincerely in order to ascertain exactly what fate their children met.

In two cases, the Commission confirmed that the children who had "disappeared" had in fact been adopted.

Miriam, daughter of David Shukar

The Complaint: In 1967, David Shukar complained that his daughter Miriam, who was born in the camp at Rosh HoAyin and kept in the infant home there for about three months, was transferred to a hospital. From then all trace of her had been lost. The father maintains that despite all his efforts at finding her, he has not succeeded.

The Investigation:

1. Regarding the above infant, we have made an exhaustive search, which has finally led to discovering the missing girl. The investigation revealed that the girl is alive and is today in the home of an adoptive family under a legal Order of Adoption. According to the best information available to the Commission, the father does not know yet about this fact.

2. In view of the secrecy of the discovery and in accord with the law of adoption, the Commission may not detail in this report the methods and the results of its investigation until a decision is rendered by the authorities concerning what is to be done with the facts that have been discovered. The report of the investigation about this girl, including all the documents, is being held by the Commission until a final decision is rendered.

Rachel, daughter of Menachem Saady

The Complaint: On March 31, 1967, Tamar Saady complained that her sister Rachel, who had come with her to Israel at the age of three on January 13, 1949, had disappeared.

The Investigation:

1. The investigation reveals that Rachel, daughter of Menachem Saady, is alive and has been adopted in accordance with the law.

2. Because of the secrecy involved and in accord with the law of adoption, the Commission may not provide all the details that it discovered.

3. The files of the Investigative Commission will be held until the decision of the authorities is rendered.

There are several cases in which the Commission was unable to determine conclusively what happened to the missing children because documents had been destroyed.

complained about the disappearance of his son Chaim at the age of seven months from the infant home in the immigrant camp at Ein-Shemer.

The Investigation:

1. The Kairwany family arrived in Israel in 1949, received immigration certificate no. 5362, and was housed at the immigrant camp Ein-Shemer B. The boy Chaim, who was then ten months old, was admitted to the infant home because he was not feeling well. According to the father, the mother was not permitted to visit the child for fear of infectious disease.

2. The Commission has succeeded in finding a register belonging to camp Ein-Shemer B, in which there are listings of six people sent from the camp to assorted hospitals. In this register, under no. 10, there is a listing referring to an infant named Chaim, implying that he was sent to the hospital at Pardes Chana. No date is given.

3. In view of the fact that the Commission discovered that this child was sent from the infant home at Ein-Shemer to Pardes Chana, it hoped to find in the documents relating to the immigrant camp at Pardes Chana whether the child had been admitted to that hospital and what happened to him. After much effort, it turned out that in 1953, when the hospital was closed down, a guard at the Pardes Chana camp named Aharon Galdaty was instructed by the director of the hospital to burn all the hospital documents, which he did.

Consequently, the Commission is, unfortunately, unable to discover whether this child was ever admitted to the hospital in Pardes Chana. Much searching for documents in children's institutions and hospitals throughout the land has been made in the hope that some mention may be made of his admission to one of those hospitals. However, those efforts have borne no fruit.

As a matter of fact, thousands of registers and listings of

It is among this group of children that the Commission used its best cover-up tactics to camouflage the fact that the children were kidnapped and sold. Alibis used to locate many children (such as the records of "Ein-Shemer were destroyed", or burial record at Netanya's infant cemetery "were destroyed", but surely the child is buried here, or there, or he definitely died), were of no avail in the following cases. We bring only a few entire case histories as the Commission themselves note. But in these cases can be seen the entire scope of this fraudulent Zionist Commission. Only two members were installed on this commission, which proves how unimportant it was to the Zionist government to locate these missing children.

Space does not permit us to reprint the entire findings of the missing children the Zionist Commission admit they **also couldn't find** any trace of their whereabouts. But we deem it necessary for posterity and for religious reasons to print their names for who can foresee the dangers emanating from a marriage between a kidnapped boy and his sister or vice-versa—a kidnapped girl and her brother.

--Amman, the daughter of Yosef Levy.

--Chaim, the son of Efraim Kurani.

--Shoshana, the daughter of Salem Kuta.

--Tarnega, the daughter of Moshe David Gubani.

--Tzion, the son of Rafoel Amrani.

--Ruth, the daughter of Chaim Amram Abraham

--Yediyah (Netzhiyah), the daughter of Salem Bouni.

--Eliya (Eliyah), the son of Saadya Yissocher.

--Yosef, the son of (Tzalach) Tzadok Yahya.

Chaim ben Yichya Kairwany

The Complaint: On March 23, 1967, Yichya Kairwany

twenty-five similar institutions were examined, and not one entry referred to this boy.

Since the Commission feels that further efforts will not lead to discovering any entries regarding this boy, it concludes sorrowfully that it has been unable to determine what happened to him.

Ziona, daughter of Yichya Hashash

The Complaint: On September 5, 1966, Ahuva Chaviva Hashash filed a complaint about the disappearance of her daughter Ziona, aged three months, who disappeared from the infant home at Ein-Shemer in 1950. According to the complaint, Mrs. Hashash was told at that time by those in charge of the infant home that her daughter was taken to a hospital and died there. The mother did not see the child's body, nor was she told where she was buried.

The Investigation: The Hashash family arrived from Yemen on December 18, 1949, received immigrant certificate no. 58711, and was housed at Ein-Shemer B. Ziona, who was then three months old, was taken to the infant home there. About ten days later, when her mother came to visit, she was told the child had been sick and had been sent to the hospital in Haifa. The next day she was told that the child had died.

Since, according to the child's mother, the child was sent to the hospital in Haifa, a very detailed examination of the registry at Rambam Hospital was made. An entry was found for February 6, 1950, indicating that the child was indeed admitted to the hospital, where she was kept until February 19, 1950 because of a general poisoning and dehydration. That entry notes that the child Ziona was returned with a group of children to the immigrant camp at Pardes Chana.

The Commission was, unfortunately, unable to discover whether Ziona had ever arrived at the Pardes Chana camp. As

noted in the report regarding Chaim Kairwany (no. 321), all the registers of the hospital in Pardes Chana were burnt in 1953 by a guard at the instruction of the director of the hospital.

The Commission was not satisfied with this, and made further detailed searches among documents and listings of twenty-five institutions, hospitals and infants' homes, hoping to find some indication from registration listings regarding this girl.

To the Commission's sorrow, there is no entry anywhere regarding this child. It was therefore impossible to discover what happened to her.

It should be noted that, in checking the various entries, the Commission discovered that in Ashkelon there is an entry for immigrant no. 157346, found in the census office of the Ministry of the Interior. It refers to an infant Tziona and indicates that she died.

Moreover, on the mother's immigration certificate no. 58711, it has been entered that the girl died on December 29, 1950.

Despite these entries, the Commission cannot determine beyond doubt that this child is indeed dead.

Saada, daughter of Salach Shiimon Yehoshua

The Complaint: The investigation of this case was in the hands of the Israeli police. When the Commission was established, the police file was submitted to the Commission to continue the investigation. According to the child's father, Saada, aged four months, disappeared from the hospital at the Beit Lid camp in 1949.

The Investigation:

1. The Yehoshua family arrived from Yemen on December 14, 1949, was issued immigration certificate no. 54398, and was housed in the Beit Lid B camp. On October 23, 1949, Saada was

hospitalized in the local hospital. In May 1952, the police stationed at K'far Yonah received a complaint about the disappearance of this girl and opened an investigation, but did not succeed in discovering any trace of her. As a matter of course, the documents of the immigrant camp of Beit Lid were examined, and there was no mention of a child who could be identified as the subject of the investigation. The search made by the police in other places, yielded no results.

2. The Commission checked out again the documents it received about the camp at Beit Lid. Among the many documents was a medical file without a number which indicated that, on October 23, 1949, an unnamed Yemenite girl was readmitted to the local hospital. She was about two months old and was suffering from severe malnutrition, diarrhea and vomiting. It was also noted in the medical file that the child had been suffering for eighteen days. On October 24, 1949, an entry was made that the child had died.

3. The Commission feels it is reasonable to assume that the above entry refers to Saada. However, in view of the uncertainty and in view of a number of details which do not match, the Commission cannot determine definitely that it was Saada, daughter of Salach Shimon Yehoshua, who died.

4. The Commission attempted to discover traces of this girl in twenty-five institutions that existed at that time, including infants' homes and assorted hospitals, but found no trace of her.

Rachel, daughter of Seliman Shama

The Complaint: On April 4, 1960, the child's mother, Zohara Shama, complained to the police in Petach Tikva that her daughter Rachel, aged three weeks, had disappeared in 1949 from the infant home in Rosh HoAyin camp. The Petach Tikva police opened a missing person's file no. 9-60 and began an investigation that yielded no results. On April 6, 1967, the

child's mother renewed the complaint before the Commission and reasserted the above details.

The Investigation: The Shamar family arrived in Israel on November 13, 1949, received immigration certificate no. 056178, and was housed at the immigrant camp Rosh HoAyin B. At a later date, the family was transferred to Ein Shemer B.

Rachel, who had taken ill, was hospitalized on April 23, 1950, at the Hadassah Hospital in Rosh HoAyin. Medical folder no. 241 attests to that. The folder implies that the child suffered from pneumonia and stayed in the hospital until June 26, 1950, when she was sent to the infant home at Rosh HoAyin B.

In the same file, there is an entry that the girl was admitted to the infant home at Rosh HoAyin B. Efforts have been made to find the entries regarding the infant home Rosh HoAyin B, but nothing at all has been found. It is probable that when the camp was disbanded, the archives of the infants' home were transferred to the WIZO Institution "For Mother and Child", where all traces of it have been lost.

The Commission also searched through the lists and the documents of twenty-five institutions and there, too, found nothing relating to this child.

Saada, daughter of Yosef Kumeimy

The Complaint: On March 23, 1957, Margalit Kumeimy reported the disappearance of her daughter Saada, aged one year, from the infant home in Rosh HoAyin camp A.

The Investigation: Margalit Kumeimy arrived in Israel on September 25, 1949; received immigration certificate no. 5433; and was accompanied by her mother and her daughter Saada, aged one year. They arrived in Rosh HoAyin camp A.

During the investigation, the Commission discovered traces of the child Saada up to January 15, 1950. In the immigration

months old, disappeared in 1949 from the nursery in the Ein-Shemer camp. The police of Pardes Chana began a file of missing persons no. 1161 and began investigating. The investigation continued sporadically until 1966 and brought no results.

On March 21, 1967, Margalit Pinchas, the former Tulua Salaam, mother of the missing Tzion, testified before the Committee and renewed her complaints regarding her son's disappearance.

The Investigation: The Salaam family came to Israel from Yemen on December 12, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 57052, and was settled in the Ein-Shemer camp. The family had a five-month-old son named Tzion. The father of the family, Yechia, was killed in February, 1950 in a work accident.

In Ein-Shemer, the baby Tzion became ill and was taken to the nursery and from there to the Tel HaShomer Hospital on December 23, 1949 because of an intestinal disease.

Tzion remained in the hospital until February 16, 1950 in accordance with medical file no. 7506149 of the Tel HaShomer Hospital. On April 9, 1950, Tzion became ill a second time and, according to medical file no. 3060150 of the Rambam Hospital, he was kept there from April 9 until July 4, 1950 because of an intestinal sickness and dehydration. On this date, he was sent to recuperate at the nursery "Umnah" in Haifa and remained there until August 18, 1950. It is written that Tzion was sent on that date to Ein-Shemer in an ambulance.

Since, according to the boy's mother, she did not receive him from "Umnah", the Committee tried to find the boy's whereabouts from Magen David Adom. From very exacting searches and checks in the Magen David Adom branches in Chadera and Haifa, they could not find documents from that period. According to those working in Magen David Adom

register of Rosh HoAyin A, Saada was listed on card no. 749 as having arrived at the immigrant camp on September 25, 1949. Similarly, two medical files, nos. 140 and 3A, of the Hadassah Hospital in Rosh HoAyin were found, and the implication of those two files was that Saada was hospitalized there twice: on October 8, 1949 through October 26 for measles and on December 2, 1949 through January 15, 1950 for a number of ailments including malaria, malnutrition and a sore throat.

According to medical file no. 140, Saada was dismissed from this hospital and sent to the infant home at Rosh HoAyin B. Efforts made by the Commission to trace her after her discharge from the hospital have borne no fruit.

The investigation indicated that the child left the hospital on January 15, 1950 in satisfactory physical health.

Since the archives of the infant home at Rosh HoAyin B as well as those of the immigrant camp at Rosh HoAyin A have been lost, the Commission could not discover if the child had actually arrived at the infant home at Rosh HoAyin B on January 15, 1950, as mentioned in the medical folder, nor what happened to her after that. The Commission is sorry to report that the archives of the infant homes at Rosh HoAyin were transferred to the WIZO Mother and Child Home, and all traces of them have been lost.

Since the archives of the infant home are not available, the Commission made every effort to examine documents and compare the child's name with other Yemenite names in the records of twenty-five institutions whose archives were gathered by the Commission, including hospitals and infant homes. Here, too, no trace was found of this child.

Tzion Ben Yechia Salaam

The Complaint: On November 29, 1960, the daughter of Salaam Salaam complained that her son Tzion, who was four

today, documents in regard to bringing children from "Ummah" to Ein-Shemer in 1950, were destroyed.

The Committee tried to trace the boy's path with documents it had received and in the offices of the Agency. And, indeed, a document dated December 20, 1950 in the abandoned archives of the Agency at Pardes Chana verified that the infant Zion Ben Yechia was taken by ambulance from Ein-Shemer to Haifa (obviously to be entered in the Rambam Hospital), and from Haifa to Ein-Shemer (it seems from "Ummah" to Ein-Shemer). A branch of the Magen David Adom in Chadera was given orders by the offices of the Agency in Pardes Chana to verify papers for the transporting of various patients, among them the above-mentioned Zion.

Since the documents of the Magen David Adom for those years in the branches at Chadera and Haifa were destroyed, it was impossible to determine to whom the infant Zion was given in the Ein-Shemer Camp.

The Committee tried to trace the child's whereabouts by comparing thousands of documents from twenty-five organizations. To its great sorrow the Committee could not trace his whereabouts there either.

Paltiel, son of David Shalom Rada

The Complaint: On July 27, 1954, Simcha Rada filed a complaint that her son Paltiel, aged five months had disappeared from the WIZO Infant Home in Jerusalem. The complaint was filed with the police in Petach Tikva. The police opened file no. 755 and began an investigation which revealed no trace of the child. On June 23, 1967, the complaint was renewed before the Commission.

The Investigation: The Rada family arrived from Yemen on January 21, 1949, and was housed in Atlit camp. Paltiel, who was then about six-months-old, was transferred to the WIZO

Infant Home in Jerusalem because his father, David Salem, had died and his mother was burdened with four other children.

The Commission's investigation revealed that the boy Paltiel did, indeed, live at the infant home operated by WIZO in Jerusalem. This is substantiated by a medical file found there, referring to this child. This file indicated that the child arrived unhealthily. On March 20, 1950, when his physical condition had improved, it is indicated in the medical file that he was sent home. Moreover, the medical file contains a letter dated March 20, 1950, signed by Dr. Israel of the M.S.R.L. division of the state of Israel to the WIZO Infant Home in Jerusalem, requesting that eight children, among them the boy Paltiel, be sent with the bearer of the letter to the infant home at Rosh HoAyin C.

In view of the above documents, the Commission is convinced that Paltiel was at the WIZO Infant Home in Jerusalem until March 23, 1950. From the documents available from WIZO in Jerusalem, the Commission could not determine who the man was who transferred the children to camp Rosh HoAyin C.

Since, according to the mother's complaint, she did not see the child in Rosh HoAyin after his stay at WIZO in Jerusalem, the Commission sought to track him down in Rosh HoAyin.

The Commission notes with sorrow that all the documents relating to the infant home at camp Rosh HoAyin C, have not been found. Despite a detailed search in the Jewish Agency and at WIZO, no trace of the archives of that infant home has been found.

The Commission had no alternative but to search through the documents of other institutions in the hope that it might discover some trace of the child. The Commission, indeed, searched and compared the name of this child with thousands of names and thousands of documents in the archives of twenty-

five institutions, but no trace of him was found there.

The Commission has a reasonable basis on which to assume that Paltiel did, indeed, arrive at the infants' home at camp Rosh HoAyin C. This is the testimony of Yonah Sinwani, today living in Kadima. This woman, who knew the Rada family in Aden, testified in the police station in Petach Tikva, on July 13, 1955, that she had seen the boy Paltiel at the infant home in Rosh HoAyin after his return from the WIZO institution in Jerusalem. Moreover, she told this to Paltiel's mother.

In summary, since the archives of the infant home in Rosh HoAyin are missing, the Commission could not, despite a concentrated search, find any trace of the boy.

Yisroel ben Yosef Madmon

The Complaint: On March 15, 1967, Yosef Madmon complained that his son Yisroel, at the age of five days, disappeared from the nursery of the camp at Rosh HoAyin.

The Investigation: The Madmon family came to Israel on September 18, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 54804 and was put in the camp at Rosh HoAyin Aleph. The mother was pregnant at the time. On the day they arrived, she gave birth to the above-mentioned Yisroel at the DeJani Hospital in Jaffa. After five days, she and her infant returned to the Rosh HoAyin camp, and the infant Yisroel was put in the nursery there.

In the DeJani Hospital, file no. 883149 verifies these details.

The Committee attempted to trace the above-mentioned infant through documents of immigrants to Rosh HoAyin and was not able to find out where the infant was sent from there, if indeed he was placed there. In the hope that the child's whereabouts would be discovered in other organizations, the Committee investigated twenty-five organizations from the nurseries to the hospitals existing at that time, but unfortunately could not trace the child's location.

Moshe ben Salem Nadjar

The Complaint: A complaint about the disappearance of Moshe, son of Salem Nadjar, was received at the police station in Petach Tikva in September, 1950, as a result of which the Israeli Police Department opened an investigation to trace this boy. Despite their efforts, which continued through 1952, no trace of the boy was found.

The child's mother, Rachel Nadjar, renewed the complaint to this Commission and requested an investigation.

The Investigation:

1. The Nadjar family arrived from Yemen on September 6, 1949, was issued immigration certificate no. 48218, and was housed in the immigrant camp Pardesiya 7 (Beit Lid).
2. Together with the rest of his family, Moshe, who was then eight months old, was settled in the camp. The child took ill and was hospitalized in Tel HaShomer Hospital on December 21, 1949. He was discharged on January 8, 1950.
3. Medical file no. 76949 certifies the above details.
4. In the police file which was given over to the Commission, we found that shortly after the boy's disappearance, as a result of the father's searches for his child, Mrs. Madayi, supervisor of hygiene in the Pardesiya (Beit Lid) camp, filed a complaint with the police in Petach Tikva, requesting that they investigate and find the child. The police investigation at that time led to the discovery that Moshe had been sent from the Tel HaShomer Hospital to the Ein-Shemer camp by mistake, rather than to the Beit Lid-Pardesiya immigrant camp. A doctor from the Tel HaShomer Hospital testified to the police that he himself discharged the child from the hospital and instructed that he be transferred to Ein-Shemer with his Magen David ambulance out of Ramat Gan. All this took place on January 8, 1950.
5. The Magen David Adom register in Ramat Gan

confirmed the doctor's testimony. The ambulance driver, Menachem Wolman, testified before the Commission that he had indeed driven the child in accord with the above details. According to him, the procedure was that children of this age were handed over to the director of the local infant home. What is strange is that despite the investigation being made such a very short time after the disappearance of the child, the police then found no entry or documents in the Ein-Shemer camp to indicate that Moshe had actually arrived there.

6. The police at that time, searched through the infant home in Ein-Shemer in the hope of finding the child, but he was not found.

The Commission sought out the archives and documents relative to the Ein-Shemer camp, since it was clear from the police file that there had been an error and the child had been sent there rather than to his parents at the immigrant camp in Beit Lid-Pardesiya. The Commission investigation revealed that all the documents and registers relevant to the infant home in Ein-Shemer had been lost. Consequently, it was impossible to determine if the child had ever arrived and had been formally received at the infant home in Ein-Shemer camp, as was told the police at the time by workers at the infant home.

7. The Commission thought to discover the documents regarding the infant home at the Beit Lid camp with the faint hope of finding some trace of the child there. Here again, this was impossible, because most of the archives at the infant home in this camp was destroyed when the camp closed down. Although a number of entries were found in an abandoned shack, there was no record of the child there.

8. Considering the possibility that the child might have died and been buried, a search was made among the documents of the various burial societies in that area and also in the national book of the dead; but even there no trace of this child was

found. Moreover, in the hope that perhaps the child was sent from Ein Shemer to one of the other infant homes which existed at that time, the Commission investigated in great detail the documents and the registers of twenty-five institutions that functioned at that time, but unfortunately there, too, no trace of the child was found.

Rochel Bat Shoker Vehav Cohen

The Complaint: The complaint in this matter was presented by the mother of the girl in 1954 to the police in Ofakim. When the Committee was established, she renewed her complaint on March 2, 1967. According to the girl's parents, Rachel disappeared from the immigrant camp Ein-Shemer Aleph when she was approximately a year old. To this day, they do not know what happened to her. As was mentioned, the parents complained to the police and to other organizations, but they did not find the girl.

The Investigation:

1. The Vehav Cohen family came to Israel from Yemen on October 17, 1949, according to immigration certificate no. 51380 and was placed in the camp Ein-Shemer Aleph.

2. The girl Rachel was then approximately a year old and became ill in the camp, so her mother took her to the infirmary there.

3. Since the parents could not testify to which hospital she was sent, the Committee searched for documents which would reveal this. In the Rambam Hospital in Haifa, we located a medical file no. 10695, from which can be deduced that the above-mentioned girl, Rachel, was accepted to the hospital on December 21, 1949 from the Ein-Shemer camp due to weakness and dehydration, and remained there until January 14, 1950, when she was discharged in good condition. From the above-mentioned file, one cannot know to where she was sent.

4. It cannot be determined if the girl was returned to the nursery at Ein-Shemer, since the registrar and documents of the nursery were lost or destroyed when the nursery was closed.

5. Because the Committee suspected that the baby had died and been buried, we searched the records of the burial society and the records of deaths in the Bureau of the Interior, but we found no registration that testifies that this infant died and was buried.

6. In the hope that perhaps she had been sent from the Rambam Hospital to one of the children's institutions present at that time in Israel, the Committee checked documents of twenty-five institutions but there, too, her path was not revealed.

Tamania, daughter of Yosef Habari

The Complaint: On March 1, 1957, Yosef Habari filed a complaint with the Commission that his daughter Tamania had disappeared from a hospital in Tel Aviv where she was taken when she was eight or nine years old.

The Investigation:

1. The Habari family arrived from Yemen on September 19, 1949, was issued immigration certificate no. 54910, and was housed at the Rosh HoAyin immigrant camp. Tamania fell ill and was hospitalized in a hospital which the mother said was in Tel Aviv, where she visited her a number of times. The last time she was there, she was told that the child had been sent to a different hospital; she never saw her again.

2. Since the Commission was not told the name of the hospital in which, according to the parents, the child was hospitalized, the mother was taken by one of the Commission investigators to visit the hospitals in Tel Aviv, in the hope that she would be able to identify the hospital. The mother identified the Hadassah Hospital in Tel Aviv as the one. But

examination of the register of the hospital did not show a girl by this name as ever having been admitted. There were a number of similar entries but, after an investigation, the Commission was convinced that they did not refer to the subject of this investigation. In view of the possibility that the mother may have erred in identifying the hospital, the archives of the DeJani Hospital in Yaffo, which then served as a general hospital and received patients from the Rosh HoAyin Hospital, were examined. Here, too, no entries referring to this child were found.

3. The Commission examined the national registry of deaths, as well as documents in the archives of twenty-five institutions, including infant homes and hospitals. But there, too, we have been unable to discover any trace of this girl.

Rachel-Sarah, daughter of Menashe Litzany

The Complaint: On September 11, 1956, a fifteen-year-old boy named Meir Litzany, brother of Rachel, wrote to the Public Service Commission of the Knesset and filed a complaint that his sister Rachel-Sarah, aged three weeks, had disappeared from the Ein-Shemer camp in 1950. The Investigative Commission was given this file by the Israeli police who had investigated the matter. The child's mother, Varda, was questioned. According to her testimony, she gave birth to the child at Rambam Hospital in Haifa. When she returned to the Ein-Shemer camp after the birth, the child was kept in the infant home. Three weeks later, she was told the child had died, but she did not see her body.

The Investigation:

1. The Litzany family arrived from Yemen on January 4, 1950, was issued immigration certificate no. 71136, and was housed in the Ein-Shemer camp.
2. Since the mother testified that she had given birth to

Rachel-Sarah at the Rambam Hospital, a careful investigation was made of the birth register there, but no entry of the birth of a child by that name was found.

3. The Commission then searched for registers at the Ein-Shemer camp to find out whether a woman by the name of Varda had ever given birth or had been living there. The Commission discovered in one of the abandoned shacks in Pardesiya part of an archive relating to the Ein-Shemer camp. In one of the entries, it was found that on January 18, 1950 Varda, the wife of Menashe Litzany, had been sent to the Moladah Maternity Hospital in Haifa. It, therefore, seems apparent that the mother made a mistake about the name of the hospital. The Commission wished to study the register of the Moladah Hospital but discovered that, unfortunately, the hospital had closed down and its archives had been destroyed by the hospital owner. Despite this, the Commission then checked the Ministry of Interior's records in Jerusalem regarding all the birth entries from the Moladah Hospital and from Rambam Hospital. Nevertheless, there was no entry concerning the birth of a girl with the above name.

4. Simultaneously, since the mother testified that she had been told that the child was dead, the Commission investigated the lists of the burial societies as well as the listings of twenty-five other institutions throughout Israel, but was unfortunately unable to discover any trace of this child.

In summary: The Commission concludes that many factors led to the shocking fact that 342 children disappeared during those years without their parents having any idea what happened to them, or being unable to believe what has been told them about the deaths of their children. The Commission's investigations made it clear that, during the years 1949-1953, when the masses

of Yemeni Jews arrived in Israel, some 70,000 Yemeni Jews arrived. The Commission does not have the precise number of children included in this number, but it certainly was a very great number.



What do you see in these faces? In the peyos of the little children? Are you struck by the gentle Jewish "chain", the sign of "the people of the Book"? Do you see in these graceful expressions, in the eyes full of compassion and humility, the love of all

When the Commission discovered the Yemeni Jews who died in the Pardesiya immigrant camp, including children, had generally been buried at the Natanya Cemetery, we hoped to find in the burial society offices in Natanya lists, as well as the burial permits of those who were buried there and so, hopefully, to trace some of the children who disappeared or who had died without their parents' knowledge. Here again, unfortunately, the Commission discovered that the local grave digger had kept these records and the burial permits at his home and that, upon his death around 1960, his wife destroyed them.

Regarding the camp in Ein-Shemer, the camp was divided into three parts: A, B, and C, all for Yemeni Jews. The camps were set up in August 1949 and were turned into temporary housing at the end of 1950. There were infant homes and a hospital in this camp. The Commission was unable to discover any trace at all of the records of the camp itself or those of the infant homes. It seems that, upon the closing down of the camps, the records were put in abandoned shacks without any protection, so that with the passage of time they were lost or destroyed. This made our work extremely difficult, since this camp was home for a tremendous number of Yemeni Jews. A large part of the twenty-two children who were not found by the Commission had lived in Ein-Shemer. The medical files of the local hospital also were for the most part not available. It seems that upon the closing down of the hospital, the medical files and other documents

were placed in an unguarded shack at the Pardes Chana immigrant camp. When the Commission discovered that shack, it turned out that, because of time and weather, they had either been destroyed or lost. Through much effort, the Commission was able to sift through a fraction of the material which aided in the identification of some of the missing children.

Adoption

From the beginning of the Commission's investigation, it considered the possibility that it would not discover some of the children who have disappeared, and would find it necessary to study all the adoption files in the rabbinical and secular courts in order to determine whether any of the children who had not been discovered might have been given over for adoption, for whatever reason, without the knowledge of its parents.

When the Commission could not determine what had happened to twenty-two of the children, we turned to the Attorney General to authorize us, under the law of adoption, to study court adoption files. The Attorney General granted permission for the members of the Commission to study the files on the condition that we would not publicize any details of the adoption records, other than the fact that so-and-so, listed among the missing, has been adopted.

Upon receiving this permission, the Commission studied 1500 adoption files in the Tel Aviv District Court; 1100 in the Haifa District Court; 360 in the Jerusalem District Court; and 100 adoption files in assorted Rabbinical Courts.

The adoption files refer to the years 1949-1956. In studying the files, it became clear that two of the

children about whom complaints had been filed were adopted. The details of the adoptions were not reported to anyone and are in the personal investigation files of the children, until the authorities decide what is to be done with this information.

The Investigation Abroad

Upon the establishment of the Commission, the press carried stories that Yemeni children from Israel had been given to Jews abroad. The Commission investigated in Israel these statements, but could not come to any conclusions. It is our opinion that the information presently in its hands does justify an investigation abroad, and has reported this to the Ministers of Justice and Police in a special letter on the subject and has suggested that such an investigation take place.¹

We conclude this most disgraceful affair with a few lines of editorial comment from Afikim, the Yemenite Jewish Hebrew monthly journal.

There are, to our dismay, people in Israel who argue that those kidnapers, although they should be condemned, still did a favor to those children who were kidnapped, for they saved them from a backward life devoid of culture. We don't even intend to engage in debate with those who argue this and we will not try to classify to which anti-humanist, anti-moralist group they should belong. We will just point out that those who pretend to be cultured people and in the name of that culture and humanism perpetrate barbaric crimes reveal animalism that even very backward people don't reveal.

1. The investigation never took place.

After the Six Day War and the entire political change occurring then in the Zionist state, the commission's report hardly caused a ripple. Beside the celebration of the victory, the report palled, and the general public was not interested in what had happened to a few hundred Yemeni Jews almost twenty years earlier.

Written by Yemenite rabbis in 1951, these lamentations describe the effects of the destruction of Yemenite Jewry upon their arrival in the Holy Land. They are a poignant example of the anguish caused by the Zionists' disregard for all that is holy.

A Lament

The fragments of a once glorious community wails brokenheartedly:

"In Yemen we trod the righteous path:
young and old observed the Torah and mitzvos.
Now in the Holy Land we are disillusioned; we have forsaken the ways of truth.

"In Yemen, it was our pleasure
thrice daily to pray with joyous hearts,
to keep fixed sessions in Torah day and night.
Here in our Holy Land, G-d's word is despised;
neither Torah, nor prayer nor heed paid.

"In Yemen we were distinct

Our unique attire loyal to our heritage
fringes on our garments, beards and
peyos distinguished us from the masses
Here in our Holy Land — our pride destroyed
Gentile garb replaced our own.

"In Yemen we observed the Sabbath
and Holy Days were celebrated according to law.
Yet now in our Holy Land
we perform all labors.

Woe unto us! Oh! How great is our wound!
When will it heal!

How could this happen to G-d's beloved Jewry?

"In Yemen our girls were modest,
their dress reflecting their purity of behavior.
Now in our Holy Land they walk, brazen, arm in arm with men.

Now their heads are bared -- their arms and lips too upon coming to Zion.

The crowning glory of her husband, remaining within, her face always concealed when I was in Yemen.

Men and women mingling shamelessly upon coming to Zion.

In glorious garments arrayed, crowned with tefillin, and tzitzis when I was in Yemen.

Devoid of all these, with strange clothing and bared head upon coming to Zion.

Jews with beards and peyos adorned when I was in Yemen.

Adopted the hairdos in vogue, their beards and peyos removed upon coming to Zion.

Sabbath and holidays -- dedicated to enjoyment when I was in Yemen.

Woe is me, for they are desecrated upon coming to Zion.

Houses of study -- for the laws of Moshe when I was in Yemen.

The children rejoice at their freedom from study upon coming to Zion.

There is not end to the list of what is lacking.... as it once was in Yemen.

May He Who lives forever return us and in kindness lead us as it was in the days of yore in Zion.

The sound of sighing and wails pierces the very heavens, The sound of anguish and laments from a distant land.

And harsh words pound every heart -- Zion and Yemen shout and cry out. Who will judge our case fairly? Who will defend our cause, who will back the battle of the oppressed? Who shall defend our cause, who will fight the battle of the oppressed?

Woe unto us for their honor has fallen, and their glory is sunk!

"In Yemen, justice was a way of life, justice meted out with power and sagacity.

Now in our Holy Land where, oh, where can justice be found?

How far must the poor cry for justice, must the widows be oppressed

for they have no savior.

"In Yemen, scholars and teachers were esteemed; our nobles and leaders were held in high regard.

Yet now in our Holy Land their lot is a bitter one: The intellect of the wise goes unrecognized and no one gives respite to these downtrodden souls.

"In Yemen, we were one nation, serving one G-d.

Now in our Holy Land, we are fragmented, our faith shattered.

O! Who will bandage our wounds? Who will heal our suffering?

"Would my head were water, my eye a spring of tears, I would weep day and night, bewailing the loss of my glory.

I will again bewail and mourn my loss until G-d rebuilds His Temple and we'll be returned to the ways of yore.

Upon Coming to Zion

Days and nights dedicated to Torah study when I was in Yemen.

With the laws of the flesh am I inundated upon coming to Zion.

The faith of Moshe and Jewry was that of every Jewish daughter when I was in Yemen.

Yemen said -- Woe unto me, for the wounds and the pain. In the year 5710 -- I am in disgrace -- without glory or distinction, When my children traveled to Israel.

Upon Z'nn, the holy land do I declare war. Why have you overwhelmed me in order to humiliate me?
Who shall defend our cause, who will fight the battle of the oppressed?

Zion said -- This is your sin and this is its outcome. For degrading my children in every city and village.

Since the day they were exiled to you, they found no respite. They lived in slums and you oppressed them.

You have likened them to insects and animals and beasts. And in every generation, on your account do they cry bitterly....

Who shall defend our cause, who will fight the battle of the oppressed?

Yemen said -- Do not speak harshly to me. They for their sins were exiled,

in order to receive severe punishment, and we are only messengers, carrying out the orders of the Creator. And still we have not destroyed them completely, their blood we were careful not to spill. And he who harmed them was not exonerated, but duly punished. They were recognized as unique through laws and ordinance.

Who shall defend our cause, who will fight the battle of the oppressed?

Said Zion -- Thousands and hundreds of years have passed. And my children are detained by you while I wait longingly. When will the miraculous salvation arrive? Then shall they be gathered from all the corners where they are scattered! We shall rejoice and exult with the Almighty - G-d of Hosts, to fulfill the faithful law engraved on the tablets.

Who shall defend our cause, who will fight the battle of the oppressed?

Said Yemen -- Come let us debate the matter, together. Where is your joy and tranquility? When they were with me, they were united in thought and deed -- the Torah of the One G-d to heed. And now in your midst they have denied their faith and destroyed the path they once so lovingly trod.

Who shall defend our cause, who will fight the battle of the oppressed?

Said Zion -- Your words are just and the censure from exile more dear than pearls. Woe unto me for the seed so extolled has changed face. I will find comfort in the remainder who are true -- and they, their thoughts will express in wailing voice and lament, until the fulfillment of the words. -- and your people are all righteous!



Rabbi Yehuda Durani and his son Rabbi Avrohom and grandson -- authors of the Yemenite Lamentations. Rabi Yehuda Aryeh passed away at the age of 96 in 1968 in Rosh HoAyin, a camp for Yemenites which became a town.

MURDER IN EIN SHERER

The chapter of Yemenite Jewry's holocaust in the Zionist concentration camps, cannot be complete without mention of the martyr Rabbi Yaakov Salim G'rafy, who was murdered by the Zionists on the holy sabbath, which was also the seventh day of Passover, April 9, 1950, may his blood be avenged.

Rabbi Yaakov Salim as all other Yemenite Jews brought to the Zionist state in 1949-1950 were placed in an assortment of concentration camps, one of which was called Ein-Sherer. The pictures of Ein-Sherer printed in this book, can easily be mistaken for any Nazi concentration camp. The long barracks and the barbed wire were especially reminiscent of those camps.

Week after week, month after month, the Yemenite Jews protested vehemently concerning their spiritual genocide, and that of their children. But for naught. Finally, riots began. The Yemenites refused to enter their barracks and refused to listen to the camp managers.

No one was permitted in these camps, in order to enable the Zionists to eradicate all vestiges of religion in the Yemenites and especially in their children without interference.

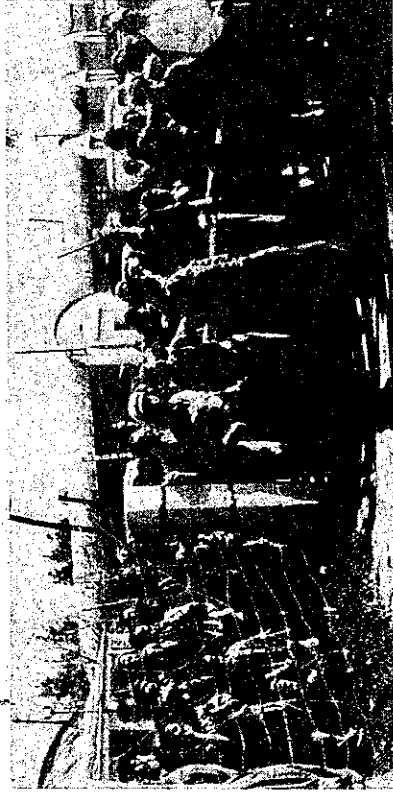
While no Jew who looked religious was permitted in, or even close to these camps, any and all Zionists were. Women in pants, without their heads covered were brought near the camp wires, so as to show the Yemenites that they had never seen such a scene before, that there was no religion in this state.

When Orthodox Jews learned of the camps and began to infiltrate them, posing as nonreligious Jews seeking jobs as street cleaners or kitchen workers, they told the Yemenites to resist this "genocide."

As resistance mounted and Yemenites demanded to be set free; refused to hand over their children to Zionist "educators"; fought against those who would take away their daughters to work and army training; and vigorously demanded that they be given complete freedom of worship; the Zionists cracked down,



Two Yemeni rabbis reciting the Yemeni Lamentations, while the entire assemblage sits on the floor as a sign of mourning. Many Orthodox Jews from Jerusalem came to join in the recitation.



Immigrant camp of Ein-Sherer. Notice the barracks; fences of barbed wire reminiscent of Nazi concentration camps.

beat hundreds so seriously, many needed hospitalization, arrested many hundreds and incarcerated them for long periods in jails.

On Passover of 1950, the Jews in the camps were shown what they would get if they would not adhere to Zionist policies. The Zionists began taking children against the will of the Jews. All havoc broke loose, when it dawned upon the Yemenites that more of their children would be lost to them. When protests mounted, the Zionists began the usual beatings and arrests which culminated in shootings to scare the Yemenite Jews not to resist. It was then that Rabbi Yaakov Salim G'rafy was murdered in cold blood by these bullets shot in his body.

His picture printed herewith, describes better than a thousand words, the anguish, fear and harrassment of this so noble man. His picture describes the anguish and desperation of this entire Jewry that was almost completely annihilated spiritually by the Zionists.

Blood flowing from his forehead, minutes before being shot is beyond mortal description. It cries out to us, as the blood of the Prophet Zechariah who was killed by the hoodlums of yesteryear.

As this unknown chapter in Jewish history may not be believed by the new generation that was not yet born in 1950, we quote and reprint some Hebrew dailies concerning this tragic episode that stifled the cries of the Yemenite Jews, once and for all. The Zionists, with the power of their guns, stole the land and conquered the people living there and with their guns annihilated this branch of Jewry that existed for thousands of years in Yemen serving the Creator of us all.

Sunday, April 9, 1950
The Immigrant Camp in Ein-Shemer is in an Uproar After the Shots.

by a writer for "Maariv"

The uproar at the immigrant camp in Ein Shemer has not

subsided over the shooting incident and the murder of one of the immigrants by a camp guard.

Those who are involved with the immigrant camps see this incident as a result -- perhaps indirectly -- of a tumult that broke out in the camps with an argument over education which shook up the discipline and the nerves.

It has become clear that the victim Salaam Yaakov G'rafy was the father of the ten-year-old girl who was the cause of the argument. This girl was arrested after an argument in the dining room. According to one explanation, her father wanted to free her and was shot on the spot by bullets that penetrated his arm, his knee and his stomach.

The immigrants who were in an uproar over the incident broke into the management offices and looked for the guard -- Shira. But the Chadera police who came dispersed the demonstrators and managed to transfer the guard to the police precinct in Chadera.

The head of the local police, Yeshuren Shef, and the chief investigator, Shamai, visited the place.

The management of the camp are making efforts to quiet the storm -- which this terrible incident aroused among immigrants from Yemen.

HaKol Hebrew daily of April 9, 1950.

The murder in Ein-Shemer is the first incident of this sort in the state of Israel, since the murderer is a law-abiding citizen, a guard in the camps, for the government. The victim is one who was in the camp for the sake of settling the land.

If G-d forbid such an incident would occur in one of the public institutions of the old settlement -- not of murder but of much less violence, there would be no end to the cries and propaganda of those "in charge" against that institution. And here, in the incident before us an abominable murder has occurred, a young man of 25 had his life snatched away by three

bullets and how pale and feeble is the reaction -- as if nothing has happened; as if a murder did not occur in a government-run camp whose workers are all government workers.

This we say of the abominable deed itself. But we, religious Jews must say more -- let the thing be said publicly; Those who know say the young man who was killed, was one who constantly asked that religion be a part of life in the camps; Those who know say that the victim demanded Torah education in the camps. And anyone who doubts this should please read the reaction in "HaDor" the official paper of Poalei Eretz Yisrael, the government party, and will see the matter as it is. From there one has proof that here was a background and reason for the murder - the blame is placed on ... you know who "outsiders who mingle with the immigrants from Yemen and teach them of a new era in the law of Israel -- there is no law and no judge -- those who run the camps are their enemies, that they persecute the immigrants and influence their children to rebel against their religion, their daughters they teach immodesty and there is no way to alleviate the problem quietly...."

And therefore according to the above mentioned paper the religious Jews are to blame who have instigated violence. Perhaps the "HaDor" people will be kind enough to reveal to us which people were murdered by residents of the camps who asked for religious education? And in general how many were murdered by the "murderers" of the Orthodox Jewish public?

Only -- the inhabitants of the camps sinned in that they dared to ask for religious education. The inhabitants of the camps sinned in wanting to guard their spiritual treasures and as a result, what happened, happened. And perhaps "HaDor" was right in its conclusion, even though there is a completely different meaning than what is inferred by "HaDor."

As they continue further in the article: "This wild instigation could change a quiet and naive tribe into one whose outbursts

will know no bounds. Someone is interested in this. Someone is telling them over and over, that here in Israel, everything is allowed.

"Here is the root of the danger -- a danger for them and for all of us. And this must be uprooted immediately."

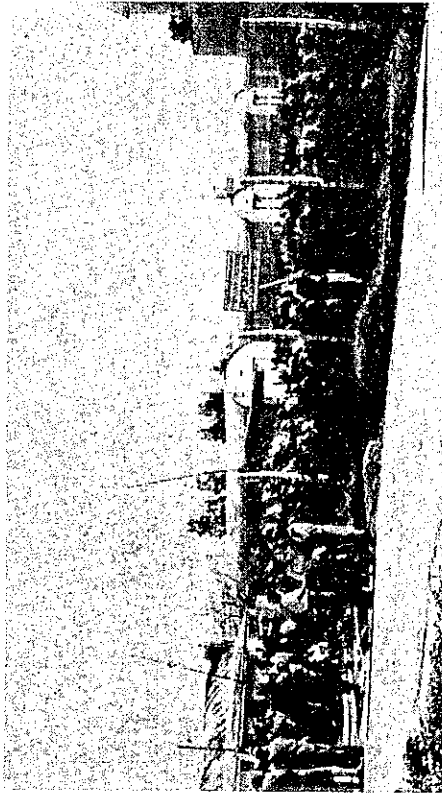
We, too, acknowledge to our despair, that the hatred between those running the camps and its inhabitants caused this -- and preventing this hatred is in the hands of the government. It will happen only when they are given their demands in regard to their spiritual needs, not in an attempt to make them relinquish their religion. Give over the management of the camps to religious Jews, Jews who are like them, who are trusted by the camp inmates -- this must be the demand of all religious Jews in Israel and the world over.

There is no Confidence

The bloody incident that occurred yesterday, on Shabbos in the immigrant camp at Ein-Sherer arouses again the thought that something is not in order.... The announcement by the police does not discuss the background. The announcement is limited only to the dry facts that one woman was arrested and that the camp members wanted to free her. But one doesn't have to delve much to decide that this incident alone couldn't have resulted in bloodshed. Not in any event. But, undermining of confidence of the immigrants toward those in charge preceded this incident. If only those in the camps felt confident of those running the place, this incident which cost a Jewish life would have never happened.

And when they now come -- for they will certainly investigate -- one cannot suffice with investigating just what occurred shabbos. It is incumbent upon them to investigate the reasons and factors which were behind the deterioration of relations between the camp residents and the guards and management.

And who knows if perhaps the moral opposition existing between those residing in the camps who are observant Jews and those running the camps who are by and large secularists, was not an indirect cause of this incident?



Immigrant camp of Ein-Sheher. Notice the barracks, fences of barbed wire reminiscent of Nazi concentration camps.

מסוקר דרלע זדיק פריז גמ בבית דגון?

אנשי תפוחיץ סוענים שהיתה הערה ראוי גורר קריית בארץ

הנהגת ממשלת פריז, שר החוץ ריבוט, הודיע היום כי הוא יפיק את המלוא מההצעה שהגישו אנשי תפוחיץ סוענים, לפיה יתאפשר להם להתיישב בארץ ישראל. ההצעה נוגעת לאלפי סוענים, שרובם יהודים, שגורשו ממוצותיהם במהלך מלחמת העולם הראשונה. ריבוט הודיע כי הוא יפיק את המלוא מההצעה, ויפיק את המלוא מההצעה, ויפיק את המלוא מההצעה.

הנהגת הממשלה בפריז

הנהגת הממשלה בפריז, שר החוץ ריבוט, הודיע היום כי הוא יפיק את המלוא מההצעה שהגישו אנשי תפוחיץ סוענים, לפיה יתאפשר להם להתיישב בארץ ישראל. ההצעה נוגעת לאלפי סוענים, שרובם יהודים, שגורשו ממוצותיהם במהלך מלחמת העולם הראשונה. ריבוט הודיע כי הוא יפיק את המלוא מההצעה, ויפיק את המלוא מההצעה, ויפיק את המלוא מההצעה.

Rep-reduction of Maariv April 9, 1950

THE NORTH AFRICAN CHILDREN ACCUSE
PART III

The Zionist attempted -- and are still attempting -- to force religious Jews to give up the traditional expression of their faith not only in Israel but in many other countries as well. The Teheran children, Yemeni Jews, Moroccan Jews, Djerban Jews, Algerian Jews, Persian Jews and Iraqi Jews have all fallen victim to the Zionist onslaught against Orthodoxy. Included in this section are examples of the Zionist manipulation of the religious freedom of Jews from North Africa, Djerba, Persia and Iraq.

NORTH AFRICA

By the 1950's the 130,000 Jews of Algeria had achieved full civic equality in their country. The professions, the administration, trade and commerce were all open to them. There were thriving Jewish communities in the cities as well as in small towns and villages. The Jews of the smaller communities, in particular, maintained their religious traditions. Their children were educated in chedarim, Talmud Torahs and yeshivas. Joseph B. Schechtman states in *On Wings of Eagles* that "in the eight principal southern (Algerian) communities with a Jewish population of 4799, schools with a Hebrew and religious curriculum are attended by 1014 children of 5-15 years of age."

These are not unusual figures for the areas of North Africa. The Jews of that area had constantly maintained their religious observances and had placed great importance on religious education for their children.

Lawrence Resner, a visitor to Morocco, states that Moroccan Jewish parents, for example, no matter how poorly educated they were themselves, made every effort to have their

J. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles*, p. 326.

Casablanca and Marakesh were the principle centers for the Zionist recruiting offices. The Zionists propagandized primarily through local synagogues. Schechtman says that "on Sabbath, rabbis read it (the propaganda) to their congregations, painting a glowing and appealing account of life in the resurrected Jewish state. There was no deceit in this representation," he says, but he admits, "it was, at best, one-sided: the hard realities of a young and poor pioneering country were only sketchily mentioned."¹ The Jewish Agency did not confine itself to the cities, but also sent recruiters to the villages to convince the Jews to immigrate.

But the Zionists were not only recruiting immigrants, they were also attempting to persuade the Moroccan Jews to give up their religious observances. Rafael Abu, the son of the late French consul in Tiberias, wrote from Casablanca on March 17, 1949:

"Upon my arrival here, I found hard work before me because the Mapam has spread its net over Morocco and has begun to influence the Jews to atheism; but I fight against them,

"I am very grieved by that and I write to you of the details so that you may concern yourself with this matter and do everything in your power to save this part of Jewry for which the entire Jewish world must become the guardian, and which cries out to us: 'Save us!'"

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.

children educated. The Jewish schools had a nearly perfect attendance record.

But the Alliance Israelite Universelle sought to change the religious focus of the Moroccan children's education by eliminating completely the chedaram. The condescending attitude of the Zionists toward religious education is painfully evident in Resner's comments on the chedaram. "Years ago, in the absence of any other facilities, these classrooms helped keep the Jews aware of their traditions. In the year 1950 they had become a pitiful anachronism."² Regarding the Alliance Israelite's desire to eliminate this religious education, he calls it "a praiseworthy objective." Although the Zionist onslaught against religious children had made inroads by 1950, there were still 5450 of the 35,638 children (15.2%) who attended chedaram. The attack was partially successful, however, for by 1954, fifty-five of the former chedaram had been closed with their pupils having been transferred to other schools.³

Zionist manipulation included more than the destruction of religious education, though. They wanted immigrants to the new state. Prior to organized large-scale immigration efforts on the part of the Zionists, which were initiated in 1948, very few Moroccans chose to move to Palestine. From 1919-1947, only 1000 of the nearly half a million Jews who entered Palestine were from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia combined. After the Jewish Agency sent recruiters to Morocco, some 8000 Moroccan Jews left for Israel from 1948 through 1949.⁴ Their success varied from year to year, however. In 1950, 4980 left Morocco; 7770 left in 1951; 5031 in 1952; 2996 in 1953; and 8171 in 1954.⁵

1. Resner, *Eternal Springs*, p. 51.

2. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles*, p. 278.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

PERSIA

Just as Schechtman says the Zionists gave a one-sided view of Israel to the Moroccans, they did the same in other areas where they attempted to recruit immigrants, such as Persia. The Israeli daily journal *Shearim*, published by the Poalei Agudah, reported in an article titled "Persian Jews Eager to Migrate to Israel" (July 20, 1950):

"Israeli delegates to Persia had always described the life in the Jewish state in general, and in the kibbutz movement in particular as traditional and Torah-true. Yet, upon arriving in Israel and visiting the kibbutzim, we were disappointed: In matters of religion and tradition, we observed a dominant spirit of licentiousness."

With these words, two of the outstanding immigrants from Persia, who are paving the way in Israel for the masses of religious Persian Jews expecting to leave for the Holy Land, expressed their sentiments before the Executive Committee of the Poalei Agudath Israel. The delegation consisting of Chaim Achut, formerly a member of the "Hechalutz" of Persia, and Shlomo Naim, both of the city of Isfahan, was received by the Executive Committee on Thursday of the past week. They were accompanied by Chacham Meir Shabtai of Jerusalem, Gavriel Gur of Zichron Meir, and the representative of the Poalei Agudath Israel in the Orient, Chacham Arkak. The new immigrants complained bitterly against the delegates from Israel in Persia, the majority of whom represent the Mapai and Mapam, who influence the youth against tradition and mislead the elder generation with their tales about the religious spirit supposedly permeating their kibbutzim.

"Our brothers and friends who left for Israel a few months ago," stated the members of the delegation, "wrote us horrifying things about the desecration of the Sabbath in the kibbutzim and of all that is held sacred among Jews. They added that this irreligiosity is, Heaven forbid, characteristic of all Israel. In order to ascertain the real situation, we came to Israel, so that we can guide our brothers who will follow us. "We visited the kibbutzim and were convinced that they are not fit to serve to absorb our brothers, the Persian Olim, who are accustomed to prayer and to Jewish customs.

"Our friends wrote us that on Passover, matzoth and bread were served together, and that those who chose to eat matzoth were mocked.

"We were thrown into a turmoil by these matters, and any desire we may have had to migrate to Israel and establish ourselves here has left us."

They demanded that the Jewish Agency no longer continue the practice of separating children from their parents and sending them ahead to Israel and, subsequently, to irreligious kibbutzim. The parents could prevent their children from being subject to an irreligious education by coming to Israel simultaneously.

The delegation of Persian Jews made a final request that a number of religious representatives be sent from Israel to Persia, in order that the destructive influence of the Zionist representatives be minimized.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS ARTICLE WERE, TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, NEVER DENIED OR REFUTED.

DJERBA

The Jews of Djerba, a very small island off the coast of Tunisia, were a devoutly religious people whose communities dated back at least to the tenth century, and possibly back to the time of King David. Lawrence Resner, the author of *Eternal Spring*, discovered that he had made a serious mistake by eating at the local hotel in the city of Djerba, which did not serve kosher food, for thereafter no Jew would talk to him.

The 4500 Jews of Djerba were an independent group, suspicious of any outside influences. Resner relates that when they heard that the Alliance Israelite Universelle sent a representative there, "he was accosted by an angry group of Djerban rabbis. 'How much,' they asked, 'does the Alliance want not to found a school in Djerba?' If the French Government had provided a school for their children," he continues, "They would have forbidden them to attend."¹ They did not want the Zionists to interfere with their way of life, either.

But the Zionists took advantage of the Djerbans' fear of Arab nationalistic feelings in Tunisia of the '50's and persuaded them to immigrate to Israel. Resner, although a Zionist himself, states that all the Djerbans had misgivings. "They seriously feared that in Israel they might find themselves in a country not religious enough for their tastes."² But the Zionists lied to them to assuage their fears and to quiet their questions about the manner of worship in Israel, their family rights there, and religious education for their children. Some Djerban rabbis who were not to be fooled nor intimidated, were harrassed, threatened and even beaten.

Thus another ancient Jewish community, one which had existed for centuries, faithfully practicing the faith of their fathers, was wiped out through Zionist deception and coercion.

1. Resner, *Eternal Spring*, p. 86.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

IRAQ

At the time of the establishment of the state of Israel, there were 130,000 Jews in Iraq. Engaged primarily in business, the professions and trades, they were a highly educated community.

In Baghdad, for example, there were 10,772 pupils in Jewish community schools and 2500 in various private schools.¹ But a Zionist plot to force them to immigrate to Israel was executed in 1950-1951 so that, by the end of 1951, over 90% of this community had left their native land. The results were devastating, both on the few Jews remaining in Iraq and on those who had departed. Chief Rabbi Sassoon Khadoury was able to keep all the twenty six synagogues intact, but only one remained in use. Forty nine of the fifty schools once run by the Baghdad Kehilah were closed.²

Middle East International carried a reprint of an article which appeared originally in **The Black Panther** magazine (November 9, 1972) of Jerusalem in which the story of the Zionist terrorist activities in Iraq and the subsequent effect on the lives of the Iraqi Jews is told. It should be noted that by June of 1959, 20% of the Iraqi Jews who immigrated to Israel were still in **maaborot** which were hastily built temporary villages, indicating the lack of concern for the immigrants once they had arrived in the Holy Land.³

How the Iraqi Jews came to Israel

On January 1, 1947 Mr. Yigal Allon, now Israel's Deputy Prime Minister but at that time commander of the Palmach, striking arm of the Haganah, wrote a letter to Dan Ram whom he styled "Commander of the Jewish Ghetos in Iraq." The letter, which is quoted in Allon's book **The Making of the Israeli Army**, runs: "Ramadan (Dan Ram's war name) My Brother, I

1. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles*, p. 362.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 366.

was very satisfied in learning that you have succeeded in starting a group and we were able to transfer at least some of the weapons intended for you. It is depressing to think that once again Jews may be slaughtered, our girls raped, that our nation's honour may again be smirched.

"...Should disturbances break out, you will be able to enlarge the circle of defenders and co-opt Jews who have not yet been organized as members of the Underground. But be warned lest you do this prematurely thereby endangering the security of your units which are, in fact the only defence you have against a terrible pogrom." The letter continues, "Finally, a warning: don't let yourself be persuaded to believe what any policeman says who appears to come to your aid.... We must encourage all forms of immigration and I am very satisfied with your efforts in this field. The sooner we bring the Jews over here the better."

During 1950-1951 over 90% of Iraq's flourishing Jewish community of 130,000 emigrated to Israel. This is common knowledge, but what is scarcely known outside Israel is how or why this sudden emigration took place. Even inside Israel, the story is not familiar to the general public. It was first revealed in part in 1966 when Yehuda Tagar, a clerk in the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem (who afterwards became an attache at the Israeli Embassy in London) broke silence about his part in the affair. In 1960 Tagar, who had been an officer in the Military Government in Acre, was sent as a secret Zionist envoy to Iraq; he was recognized by a Palestinian Arab refugee and caught. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, but was released after ten years. On May 29, 1966, the independent weekly magazine **Ha'Olam Hazeh** (edited by Mr. Uri Avnery) published an account of the emigration of the Iraqi Jews based on Tagar's testimony. Then on November 9, 1972, **The Black Panther** magazine in Jerusalem (edited by Mr. Kochavi Shemesh) printed the full story.

At the time when Israel's Independence War (1948-1949) ended, there were some 130,000 Jews in Iraq. They considered themselves to be the descendants of those who were exiled in Babylon after the destruction of the First Temple. They formed a thriving community with a high proportion of educated people. The representation of the Jewish community in Parliament was safeguarded by the Constitution, and there was at least one Jewish minister in nearly every Iraqi Cabinet. The community had never experienced either pogroms or persecution on the scale that was common in Eastern Europe. There had only been one pogrom; this was in 1941 when the pro-Nazi Rashid al-Kailani was Prime Minister. On the other hand, the community had strong ties with Palestine -- especially Jerusalem -- since Iraq and Palestine had both formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Many Iraqi Jews went to settle in Palestine between the two World Wars.

At the time of the creation of the state of Israel, the Zionist movement in Iraq had a fairly widespread underground organization which operated under the general name of "The Movement". Israeli agents and local members of the Movement organized a network to smuggle Iraqi Jews into Palestine. Caravans of immigrants went through the desert to Transjordan.

Although these immigrants were few in number, they included mostly young people. Many young Jewish intellectuals had ties with the Iraqi Communists and thought it was their duty to struggle for a change in the structure of Iraqi government and society. In return, when the War of Independence broke out, the Iraqi Communists held a demonstration in Baghdad calling for the right of the Jewish people to their own independent country.

Illegal immigration into Israel caused some clashes between the Iraqi police and the caravan guides. Suddenly, at the Jewish

Purim feast in March 1950, the authorities made a surprising announcement. Any Iraqi Jew wanting to leave Iraq would be allowed to give up his citizenship voluntarily. The official explanation which appeared in the press was that: "The encounters between the police and groups of emigrants show that some Iraqi Jews do not want to live in this country. In escaping, they give a bad name to Iraq. Those who do not wish to live among us have no place here. Let them go."

The head of the government at the time was Tawfik el-Suweidi. After the 1958 Revolution, he was put on trial and accused of treason. One of the charges was: "Aiding the state of Israel by helping 100,000 Iraqis to become Israeli citizens."

But on that day in 1950 Iraqi newspapers wrote: "Today the Jews are celebrating two festivals -- Purim and the granting of permission to emigrate to Israel." Police officers appeared at synagogues and declared themselves ready to answer any questions connected with the government announcement. They explained that all a Jew had to do in order to leave peacefully and travel to Israel was to sign a form prepared for the occasion by the government. But there was little response. Iraqi Jews were afraid it was a trap to discover who were Zionists, and Zionism was a serious crime under Iraqi law.

A month elapsed and Passover came. On the last day of Passover, the Jews of Baghdad went to walk along the Tigris in accordance with their custom, to celebrate the "Sea Song." At one moment there were 50,000 Jews -- men, women and children -- on the esplanade. By 9 p.m. their numbers had decreased as many had gone home to dinner, but el-Nawas Street was still crowded with Jewish pedestrians.

Inside the Dar el-Bidah cafe a number of young Jewish intellectuals were sitting. Suddenly a small object was thrown from a passing car and exploded on the pavement. By chance no one was hurt, but the explosion echoed throughout Iraq.

The shock particularly affected the Jewish community who felt that Iraqi terrorists were trying to assassinate Jews. Memories of Rashid el-Kailani's time were recalled and some started saying, "It is better to go to Israel."

On the following day, crowds of Jews besieged the police stations which had been appointed to register their wish to give up their citizenship. They were mostly from the poorer classes who had nothing to lose. To deal with the rush, the police asked the heads of the Jewish community to turn their synagogues and schools into registration offices, and the big Ezra Dawud synagogue was chosen for this purpose. Police officers and volunteer clerks (members of The Movement) worked day and night in shifts on the registration. The Jewish community set up a special kitchen to feed the policemen and their helpers so that they could continue their work without stopping.

When the first scare had passed, it was evident that not every Iraqi Jew wanted to leave. Only about ten thousand Jews had registered as wanting to go. Moreover there were very few flights to Israel. Only one plane came which took 150 Jews to Cyprus and then to Lydda. Iraqi Jews stopped rushing to give up their citizenship, and the police and registration clerks were left without work.

Suddenly, a second bomb exploded -- at the US Information Center. This was a large, pleasant place where many young people -- especially Jews -- used to sit and read. In summer they were given cold drinks. This time the theory was also that Iraqi extremists had placed the bomb which only by chance did not hurt anyone. Once again the Jews started rushing to the Ezra Dawud synagogue to register for emigration. But the panic lasted only a short time, and even fewer registered for emigration than before. The year 1950 ended, and March 1951 -- the date when the right to relinquish citizenship expired -- was approaching.

Then a third bomb exploded, and this time there were casualties. It was at the Massaude Shemtov synagogue which was being used as an assembly point for Jews whose turn had come to leave Iraq. They could be taken by truck directly to the planes in order to avoid being too conspicuous at the airport.

On that day in January 1951, the Massaude Shemtov synagogue was full of Kurdish Jews who had been brought from Sulaimaniyah in the north and were getting ready for their flight. Outside a Jewish boy was selling cakes to curious onlookers. When the bomb exploded, he died immediately and a Jew standing beside him was badly hurt in the eyes.

This time the Iraqi Jews had no doubts: an anti-Jewish organization was operating against them. It would be better to leave Iraq while there was still time. Again the long queues began to form, and on the last night before the deadline expired Jews were paying up to £150 or even £200 for their names to be included on the list before it closed. When the registration ended all the Iraqi Jews, except for about 5,000 had registered to emigrate to Israel.

After some days, the government decided on a new step concerning Jews who were emigrating to Israel. The cabinet, which was headed by Nuri el-Said, held a secret meeting and Parliament did the same. It was on a Saturday when Jewish businesses and most banks were closed. Even the telephone lines between Parliament and the city were cut because the government did not want the subject which was being discussed to leak to any Jewish friends of the deputies. The item on the agenda was a bill for the confiscation of the property of any Jew who had abandoned his citizenship and registered for emigration to Israel.

The bill, which immediately became law, required all the banks to cease operations and every Jewish business to close its doors. Anyone caught taking goods from a Jewish shop became

liable to seven years in jail. The property of all those who had abandoned their citizenship was confiscated and put in the hands of a government custodian; emigrants could only take £70 with them. All those who had not given up their citizenship had to present themselves at a new registration office to obtain a new identification card. They would continue to be regarded as citizens with equal rights, and they could even have passports and travel abroad. But they had to come back within three months or have their citizenship annulled. The five thousand Jews who retained their citizenship could operate their businesses again without restriction.

The wealthy Iraqi Jewish community was left unexpectedly destitute. Planes started arriving at the rate of three or four a day, and the emigrants were flown to Nicosia, accompanied by an Iraqi police officer. But after a while the make-believe that they were going to Cyprus was stopped, and the planes started flying directly to Lydda. The police officer returned to Iraq alone in the empty plane.

It seemed as if there was nothing to add to the story of the disappearance of this ancient community. But this was not the end.

Three months after the deadline for the registration of emigrants, a man entered the largest general store in Baghdad -- Orosdibak. One of the salesmen, a Palestinian refugee, turned white when he saw him; he left the counter and ran out. He called two policemen and told them: "I have recognized the face of an Israeli." Shortly after the War of Independence, the salesman had been a cafe-waiter at Akko and he knew Yehuda Tagar, the man he had recognized, from the time he worked there. Yehuda, who confessed to being an Israeli although he explained he had come to Baghdad to marry a Jewish Iraqi girl, was not the only one who was arrested. The police also caught Shalom Tzalah, a young man from Baghdad who was in charge

of the arms cache of the Haganah. He broke down during his interrogation and took the police from synagogue to synagogue, showing them where the weapons which had been smuggled in continually since World War II were hidden. He paid for this with his life after his trial.

Fifteen more were arrested. The prosecutor charged that they were members of the Zionist underground, that they had arms caches and that it was they who threw the three mysterious bombs. He claimed that their aim was first to frighten the Iraqi Jews to drive them to emigrate to Israel and then, when the whole community had moved, to use their stores of weapons and bombs "to blow up Baghdad." The accused were defended by Iraqi lawyers. Two were condemned to be hanged, and the rest were given long jail sentences.

Other threads of the story may be found in Israel. One of them is Kaduri Salim who is 49, but looks 60. He is thin, almost hunched and has a glass eye; it was he who lost his right eye at the door of the Massauda Shemtov synagogue. He had remained in Iraq for three months after leaving the hospital until his turn to leave for Israel arrived. Since then, all his efforts to obtain compensation have failed. He claims: "I was hurt by the bomb which the court of law established was thrown by The Movement. The Israeli government had to give me compensation." But the Israeli government does not recognize its responsibility for the Baghdad bombs and, in any case, will not recognize him as having been hurt in action. "I am ready to sacrifice myself for the state," he says, "but when my situation at home is bad, when my wife wants money and there isn't any, what is my sacrifice worth?"

Another thread of the story is Kaduri Eloyah, former member of the Regional Council of Or-Yehuda. He thinks that Yehuda Tagar's arrest was unnecessary. Eloyah says: "Tagar was not arrested the first time he was recognized by the

Palestinian refugee. There were several Jews on the staff of the Orosdibak store who were able to confuse the refugee to enable Yehuda to get out of the place. He should then have gone into hiding and left Iraq as soon as he could. Instead he came to Orosdibak a second time a week later, and this time he brought with him the head of the emigration movement, Mordechai ben Porat. It was then that the refugee ran out to call for the police, and Yehuda was arrested. Ben Porat was also arrested, but he succeeded in convincing the police that he didn't know Tagar and was set free on a £2,000 bail. He jumped his bail and came to Israel."

One more thread in the story is an Iraqi lawyer, now a resident of Tel Aviv. He did not want to argue whether "Zionist violence" was ethical or not, but he had some things to say about the "Iraqi affair": "After the first bomb was thrown at the Dar el-Bidah cafe, many rumors began to circulate that the communists were responsible. But, at 4 a.m. on the following morning, leaflets were already being distributed among the first worshippers at the synagogue. These warned of the dangers revealed by the bomb-throwing and recommended the Jews to come to Israel. Someone who found this strange was Salman el-Biyat, the investigating judge for South Baghdad. He said that the distribution of the leaflets at such an early hour showed prior knowledge of the bombing, and he instructed the police to investigate on these lines. They became convinced that those who threw the bombs were Jews who were trying to hasten the immigration. In fact, two youths were arrested. But unexpectedly the Ministry of Justice intervened, and the two boys were set free. The case was handed over to the investigating judge for North Baghdad, Kamal Shahein. In other words, at that stage there was still a desire not to know the truth. For the whole emigration movement came as a result of looking the other way -- or perhaps even of a more positive

agreement between the Iraqi Zionists and the Government and the Court. But after two more bombs and the arrest of the Israeli agent, matters had gone too far. The police began to act, and it was impossible to reverse the process. There is only one thing to add: objectively speaking, the trial was conducted according to international law. The evidence was such that there was nothing to prevent such sentences from being passed."

Many national institutions were in Jewish hands. Most of the banks and big stores were owned by Jews, and even the poorest of them had a higher standard of living than the average Iraqi. Their coming to Israel involved great suffering, as most of their possessions were left behind in Iraq. The transitional period in the new country caused a long interruption of their children's studies, while the emphasis was put on learning the language and acclimatizing themselves to the new life. The parents' financial problems prevented them from taking care of their children's education. Bitterness was created and Israel's rulers sent teams of teachers to the transit camps to instill the new immigrants with some elements of Zionism. In spite of this the mood did not change, and one of the most popular songs of those days spoke of the old country with nostalgia:

"What did you do, Ben Gurion?
You smuggled all of us!

Because of the past we gave up our citizenship
and came to Israel.

If only we had come riding donkeys
and hadn't arrived yet!

Alas, what a black hour it was!
To hell with the plane that brought us here!

This is a literal translation of the song they used to sing even at weddings and other festive occasions. It remained popular through the 50's and then disappeared. But no one can hardly say that the nostalgia has also gone. Although their coming to

Israel was not voluntary, the Iraqi immigrants have tried to integrate themselves into the new society. This is shown by the disintegration and scattering of the community. Unlike the Moroccan Jews, they did not feel any need for the creation of a separate community within the country because they thought Israel was meant to be theirs. But the suspicions that were aroused at the time of their immigration were realized. One of the most splendid and wealthy communities was destroyed, its members were impoverished and most of its descendants became undereducated. There were more Jews who came from Iraq with university degrees than all those who have been educated by the state since they have arrived.

A community that controlled most of the resources of Iraq -- one of the most developed states of the area -- was turned into a subject group, discriminated against and oppressed in every way. A community with its own high ethical values was caught in the spokes of the Ashkenazi culture which is totally foreign to it. A united and cultured community began to produce dilinquents of every kind in Israel. Its fine, well-formed children were now all "handicapped."

What happened to the Iraqi Jews once they reached the Holy Land is further related in an article published in the Israeli newspaper **HaModia** (October 5, 1950), the official organ of the Agudath Israel in Israel.

We are again witnessing a terrible crime committed openly by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

Children from Iraq who arrived recently in Israel were put under the supervision of Agency counselors who started to eradicate all the religious feelings of these children who up to that moment had been strictly religious.

Children from deeply religious families were taken to Dafna and other kibbutzim of the HaKibbutz HaMeuchad movement and there counselors took over those unfortunate children.

Children who always prayed and were accustomed to living according to the precepts of the Jewish religion are now forced to renounce their religion and hide all semblance of religion because they fear the counselors.

In this way, already 1300 boys and girls were alienated from our religion. The counselors were obviously trained for this purpose. They do not permit the children to pray; they force them to violate the Sabbath. The children are forced to listen to long speeches whose only purpose is to convince them that there is no G-d or holiness of the Torah. No means are beneath these agents of the Jewish Agency.

Girls who were educated along the lines of modesty and whose parents had sacrificed themselves to observe Jewish family purity, are now being especially thrown into leftist kibbutzim and persuaded that in the Holy Land there is no way and reason for a Jewish girl to live a chaste life.

If there are children who beg that they should be permitted to pray and to continue their previous way of life, they are transferred to a special place where pressure and persuasion are used on them.

All these activities can be laid to the credit of Mr. Zerubabel, the head of the Middle East Department of the Agency who serves as executioner for this purpose.

He still prepares the groundwork in Iraq and Persia, where he is sent by the Jewish Agency in order to organize aliyah. The news is spreading among Jews there that Israel is no place for religious Jews.

It is necessary that an end be put to these shameless things which put to shame the good name of the state of Israel. Religious Jewry cannot be silent when the Teheran scandal is repeated in even greater dimensions.

Zionist harrassment of the few remaining Jews in Iraq did not cease, prompting Chief Rabbi Sassoon Khadoury to send

this letter written on April 28, 1971 to S. E. U. Thant, Secretary General of the Organization of United Nations.

Mr. Secretary General,

Israel continues to conduct a virulent campaign against Iraq and against the Iraqi citizens of the Jewish religion. In this regard, I would like to assure Your Excellency that there is a considerable difference between Zionism and Judaism. Zionism is a political and racial ideology. It is a colonial and expansionist movement which contradicts the essence and the teachings of Judaism, one of the three revealed religions of the world. Zionism has too often disserved Judaism and its experts in deforming its ideas and its history and in appealing to violence against the Jews to force them to emigrate to Israel.

Your Excellency permits me through this occasion to witness before him that all the Iraqi citizens of Jewish faith profess, with regard to Iraq, sentiments of loyalism which they will never allow to be corrupted by Zionism, which would like to win them over in a whirlpool of double allegiance.

The Jews of Iraq are treated in the same manner as the other citizens in fact as well as in the law, and the allegations according to which the right to move freely to the interior of the territory and to leave the country would be refused them are not based in fact.

I ask your Excellency to be willing to take this present declaration to the attention of all the organs concerned of the UN, notably the Commission of the Rights of Man.

I seize this occasion to assure Your Excellency of my highest esteem.

EXILE WITHIN EXILE

by Emile Marmorstein

Several years ago, while discussing the exile of the heirs to the Babylonian Exile, I ventured, by way of comfort to remark that the fate of the centers of Judaism in Europe had been less merciful. My collocator, a talented interpreter of Middle Eastern history, pointed out in reply that, unlike his own community, they had been destroyed by non-Jews. He was evidently referring to Zionism's part in the reduction of the Jewish population of Iraq from about 130,000 to a few hundreds.

Actually, the dispersion of this important mercantile community surprised even those intimately involved in its affairs, and details of its mechanism have not yet been fully disclosed. Moreover, gaps in the long and, on the whole, illustrious record of the community's existence -- due to floods, plagues, invasions and factional strife -- were invariably followed by the return of fugitives and the restoration of the structure and activity of the community. History seems hardly likely to repeat itself in this respect.

One might begin by quoting extracts from a letter dated 8th September 1922 in which Menahem Saleh Daniel, who had been the first to represent the Jews of Baghdad in the Ottoman Parliament, explained firmly, though politely, his objections to Zionism in Iraq and his refusal to support it. After emphasizing that in the view of its Arab inhabitants 'any sympathy with the Zionist Movement is nothing short of a betrayal of the Arab cause', he turns to the 'conspicuous position' of the Jews, who form one third of the population of the capital, hold the larger part of the commerce of the country and offer a higher standard of literacy than the Moslems with whom they were now competing for government posts. 'In this delicate position the Jew cannot maintain himself unless he gives proof of an

unimpeachable loyalty to this country and avoids with care any action which may be misconstrued.' Unfortunately, Zionism, particularly after the arrival of a Zionist emissary (Dr. Bension), had given rise to 'a general and vague impression among the lower class that Zionism was going to end the worries of life, and that no restraint was any longer necessary in the way of expressing opinion or showing scorn to the Arabs....To the observer it was merely the reaction of a subdued race, which for a moment thought that by magic the tables were turned and that it was to become an overlord'.

The excitement, however, died down fairly soon, and for the next decade Zionist activity in Iraq was confined to the more or less discrete distribution of collecting-boxes by a few enthusiasts, who were popularly suspected of purloining its contents. By the early thirties there was virtually no trace of it. Altogether, contact between Iraqi Jews and Palestine was unpolitical. At the same time, anti-Zionist demonstrations tended to become more violent and, under Nazi influence, to be directed against Jews in general, so that reports of rising tension in Palestine were sometimes followed by bomb attacks on Jewish clubs and murderous assault on individuals -- the latter, according to rumor, in payment of old scores or as a method of encouraging compliance with more exorbitant demands. It was then that the Head of the Community, Hakham Sason Khadhouri, issued the first of his statements disassociating himself and the community from Zionism and sympathizing with the Arabs, and his example was followed by groups of notables and intellectuals. Granted that some of the signatories were merely yielding to pressure and comforted themselves with the assurance that their petitions would carry very little weight, others felt quite strongly that Zionism menaced not only their current prospects but also their hopes for the future. For, despite intermittent fear, many Jews and Muslims were on good

terms with one another, and some genuine friendships endured for years under very unfavorable conditions.

On my appointment as Headmaster of the Shamash Secondary School in 1936 I was most impressed with the closure of all Jewish shops on sabbaths and festivals i.e. the overwhelming majority of shops in the main thoroughfare, and other external signs of traditional Jewish life. Almost to the very end of its corporate existence, the community continued to provide all the facilities which observant Jews feel entitled to ask of their communal organization. Indeed, the contrast between public observance and private secularization of which I became equally aware, made me doubt for the first time the consistency of my own role. The Jews of Baghdad had been the first in the whole region to start secular schooling: The boys school founded under the auspices of the Alliance in 1864 preceded the first government school by five years. Opposition to it was fairly strong -- but incomparably weaker than the uproar which greeted the Alliance's proposal for a girls' school. Pages 77-81 of *Maaseh Avos*, which was compiled by R. Akiba Yosef Schlesinger, contains the names of several hundreds of signatories to a document of protest. Dated 24th First Adar

(1886), it adds that the list would have been much longer had it not been reported that the Alliance, on hearing of the hostility the plan had evoked in Baghdad, decided to abandon it. It was, however, implemented in 1893 when it also gained the distinction of being the first of its kind. During the next half-century some twenty Jewish educational institutions were founded. With three exceptions, the emphasis was on secular studies in general and the languages of commerce in particular, and this educational policy was considered responsible for the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the Jews of Iraq. The result was -- and I feel guilty of having abetted it -- that every year young Iraqi Jews were qualified to pursue their

studies at Western universities outnumbered those equipped to follow a gemore shiur at all expertly.

Accounts of Iraqi Jews' experiences of the Second World War naturally centered around the great pogrom of 1941 in which over a hundred defenceless Jews were butchered and more were maimed and robbed. While they report the sequence of events, the numbers of victims, cases of Jews protected by Muslims, details of government compensation and punishment of the culprits -- four of them were hung -- little attention was paid to the speed of the community's economic and psychological recovery from a catastrophe without precedent in its recent history -- as if it had been due entirely to coincidence with a period of prosperity following the Allied reconquest of the region. For obvious reasons, the formation of the Zionist 'underground' was publicized only after it had begun to function. On their arrival, the first Zionist agents were surprised to find that they had been invited to Iraq by a couple of schoolboys. In fact, numbers remained relatively small throughout. Respectable parents objected to their sons and, even more, to their daughters becoming involved in such adventures and to keeping incriminating objects in their homes. Accordingly, weapons, explosives, duplicators and membership lists were stored in the cellars of certain synagogues, where they were discovered much later as a result of information given by a defector who had turned communist.

Zionist 'underground' activity can be classified under three headings: indoctrination, emigration and defence. With regard to the first of these, classes were organized and attracted pupils, but with minor exceptions, attempts to infiltrate the Jewish primary schools failed. As for illegal emigration, the majority of those who were smuggled over the long frontier with Iran, relied on private enterprise, leaving the 'underground' to provide its own 'instructors' and members unwilling or unable

to pay the fees charged by professional smugglers. For the wealthy, passports could be obtained at a price from certain senior police officials -- some of whom had connections with the 'underground'. Defence training aimed at protecting Jewish lives and property in the event of a repetition of the 1941 outbreak, and members were alerted during the week in May 1948 when it was feared that the proclamation of the Zionist state might be the signal for an attack on the Jewish neighborhoods of Baghdad. It was later said to have been averted when the whole country was placed under martial law, which remained in force from May 1948 until the end of 1949. During those eighteen months Jewish suffering was not confined to those arrested and imprisoned on bogus charges. The chaotic state of the economy ruined hundreds of families.

In 1950 a law allowing Jews to leave the country for good on the surrender of their Iraqi citizenship was hurriedly passed through the Legislature. It came as a shock to everyone (myself included) -- indeed it has not yet been satisfactorily explained. In that year, the number of Jews registering for emigration, although exceeding government estimates, did not indicate the imminent dissolution of the community; but in the first half of the following year grenades were thrown in places where Jews used to congregate, and the rate of registration accelerated to such an extent that by the end of the period fixed for departure hopes of a massive exodus were abundantly fulfilled. At the trial of members of the 'underground' accused of throwing the grenades, the prosecution argued that the minimal injury and damage caused by the grenades showed that they had been thrown by members of the 'underground' with the intention of speeding up the departure of the waverers -- which it had clearly managed to do. Not only Muslims were convinced by this argument.

There is no point in speculating whether this 'achievement' was worth the sacrifices incurred on its behalf. Underlying attempts at historical justification is the assumption that the outcome of different courses of action would have been for the better or worse, and this is something one can never ascertain since consequences become causes with unpredictable but interdependent consequences of their own ad infinitum. May the Cause of causes guide our reflections and decisions so that they may always accord with His will!

Emile Marmorstein is the author of "Heaven at Bay" -- "The Jewish Kulturkampf in the Holy Land" -- and a frequent contributor to "The Jewish Guardian", journal of Neturei Karta. He was headmaster of a large Jewish school in Baghdad in the thirties.



Rabbi Kadouri Sassoon of Iraq, of blessed memory.

The Children of North Africa Accuse!

This is an accusation, describing how the organization Aliyat HaNoar HaDati (Immigration of Religious Youth) was purposely undermined at its inception.

In the summer of 1961, the religious community in Israel and the entire world was shocked at the anti-religious coercion of Aliyat HaNoar (Youth Aliyah), which influenced thousands of North African children who came from religious homes to abandon their faith. The children were forcibly given over, against their parents' wishes to the priests of the secular gods and unwillingly placed in secular institutions and kibbutzim where their "inquisitor" counselors labored to uproot any spark of Judaism and profane their souls.

This unhealed wound of Torah-true Jewry was torn open anew in the summer of 1964, when the fifth Knessia Gedolah of Agudath Israel in Jerusalem was addressed by the esteemed Rabbi of Meknes (Morocco), Refoel Boruch Toledano, who mourned the thousands of unfortunate North African children who had been forcibly torn from their faith. Shivers engulfed all who heard, when this elderly leader cried from his heart Judah's cry, "The boy is not here, and I, where will I go?"

This was a new chapter of the "Yaldei Teheran" (Teheran children) incidents which were well known, or the incidents of hundreds of thousands of children of immigrants who came after the establishment of the State and were forced against their will by secular counselors to abandon their faith. Religious Jewry was rallied to do hopeless battle with those kidnapers of souls -- the leader of Aliyat HaNoar -- but all the protests, pleas and threats did not help. The cries of thousands of "Yosselach" crying for spiritual help were left, suspended in the air. The religious committees in other countries contributed funds and effort to organize an independent religious organization for



A picture of Jews taken in the 1940's in Najran, Saudi Arabia. These Jews were also fooled into going to the Holy Land, walking over 600 miles.



The synagogue and yeshiva in Djerba - El Geriba.

immigrant youth, but all attempts were foiled by the criminal action of the leaders of Aliyat HaNoar (Youth Aliyah), who did not balk from using any means to foil these attempts -- with the passive encouragement of representatives of Mafdal (the National Religious Party) and the Jewish Agency.

Because of security reasons, which the illegal immigration from the above-mentioned countries were dependent on, Aliyat HaNoar succeeded in quieting the shameful scandal and all its details, which, for whatever reasons, never reached the public.

Most of the details were taken from original documents and also based on the testimony of Dr. Daniel of Zurich, who took part in the local chain of efforts and actions to save spiritually the children of North Africa.

Shocking incidents of the "spiritual preparation" that the counselors of Aliyat HaNoar gave to yeshiva students who were candidates for immigration to Israel were revealed.

The beginning of this drama is in a letter sent in the summer of 1961 by one of the deans of the yeshiva in Casablanca to a relative living in Zurich. In the letter, he mentioned that among the thousands of Jews immigrating from Morocco to Israel at that time there were approximately 450 girls and boys who were taken by the Aliyat HaNoar of the Jewish Agency and they were in a transit camp in Switzerland. He noted that most of the boys were learning in the institutions Otzar HaTorah and Chabad Yeshivos and even mentioned names of several of his students, emphasizing the need to assure them of kosher food and that they be placed in religious educational facilities of Israel.

Due to his request, a member of the religious community in Zurich contacted the Jewish Agency in Geneva and asked to be

informed of the situation of these 450 young people. The people of the Jewish Agency said they knew nothing of this group and for "life and death reasons" could not reveal details in this matter. Finally, a telephone call to the butcher store of the Jewish community revealed promptly that in the last few days large amounts of meat had been ordered for the youth camp at Morgants which is situated in the building of the World Zionist Organization (WZO). The managers of the hostel were contacted and admitted that children had been brought from North Africa. The Jewish Agency refused the request of some members of the religious community to visit the camp and see how things were run. Even the relatives of some of the children who wished to visit them were not permitted to do so. Some members of the religious community went on their own to Morgants. Upon their arrival, they saw that only 200 of the 450 children were in the hostel of WZO; the rest were put in the homes of gentiles and priests, and some were in the transit camp that had been set up in Rando. This was a weekday, and they hurried to organize groups of volunteers of Torah students from Lucerne and Monterey to spend the Sabbath in the camps with these children.

The yeshiva students who went to the camp revealed a shameful picture. Counselors from secular kibbutzim in Israel brainwashed the children incessantly with the well known argument: "You are going to Israel, and all of the Torah and its commandments were necessary only in the exile so we would not forget we are Jews."

To their dismay, they discovered that in Rando they were feeding the children nonkosher food -- they did not even offer kosher food. They tried to force the children to eat but the hotel owner, a gentile who had been active during the holocaust in rescuing Jews and knew that Jews are forbidden to eat

nonkosher foods, stopped the counselors from carrying out their plan and kept watch after them. Young girls who had been educated in the Lubavitcher institutions revealed an inner strength when, for fourteen consecutive days, they refused to eat anything but bread and water.

At the initiation of the yeshiva students, a *minyán* (quorum of at least ten adult males needed for public prayer) was organized for prayer in the camp; but the counselors of the Jewish Agency did not hesitate to disrupt "public prayer" by mingling with those who were praying and by smoking on the Sabbath. There was one counselor by the name of Reiffler who especially excelled in this.

The students could not come in direct contact with the children or speak to them individually because the secular counselors threatened them with knives. They managed to get from the children's mouths that they were promised that they were going to Israel, and there they would have a way of life like "at home." It also became clear that the Jewish Agency had prepared an alibi from the start in regard to the education that the children would be getting. Every child was asked: "Do you wish to be free?" To the children from religious homes, there was no hint of the deceit in this question. They understood that they were being asked if they wished for freedom and independence, and they answered positively. But for the Jewish Agency, this was enough to write them down as lost to the Jewish people and its faith. All this was done by Aliyat HaNoar under the leadership of Moshe Kol, and under the auspices of the Department of Immigration of the Jewish Agency represented by Mr. Z. Shragai of Jerusalem, Mr. B. Duvdany, head of the Paris branch, and Mr. Akiva Keshet, assistant head of the Geneva branch of the Jewish Agency.

Shaken, the religious people in Zurich turned to the offices of the division in Geneva. They expressed their strong protest and warned that they would alert the Jewish world and take

steps against the loss of these children, most of whom were from religious homes, against their parents' will and by force. The people at the Jewish Agency were taken aback at first and tried to fool them by promising that the 450 children were going to Israel to be settled in religious settlements. To back themselves up, they offered to make an exact list of children from religious homes and prove by this that their promise was kept. Since the religious community leaders did not have the details, they managed to make a partial list of 150 children whose religious background was certain and to give it to Mr. Refoel R. of Bnei Brak, who waited when the children arrived in Israel from Marseilles and also alerted a member of the Peylim organization.

It took only a few days for the Orthodox community to see how they had been fooled by the people of the Jewish Agency. Instead of sending the children directly to religious absorption centers, they were first taken to the Ramot Hadassah camp and there scattered secretly to different kibbutzim in all corners of the country in order to prevent their being found. When this caused a public outcry, the classification committee agreed to examine again the children's backgrounds. The sad end to this unfortunate classification is perhaps not so well known to the public: Of 450 children, 100 retarded or otherwise emotionally disturbed children were chosen as a "cover-up" to be sent to the religious institution of the Ponevezher Rov. The people of the Agency argued that the list of religious children got lost and the cards were misprinted, and when transports of thousands of children are streaming into the country it is difficult to find out where several hundred religious children may have disappeared.

At this point, a suggestion was made to establish an independent organization "For the Immigration of Religious Youth" (Aliyat HaNoar HaDati), which would not be subjugated to the Jewish Agency. All of Swiss Jewry was aroused at the kidnapping of souls and the anti-religious

"preparation" in their land and were prepared to do anything to save the children of immigrants from atheism. A member of Peylim told the leaders in Zurich to travel themselves to Morocco to choose children to go to Israel and take them there and arrange for them to be in institutions supported by an independent fund that would be established.

Dr. Moshe R., a pediatrician by profession, stopped his work and went to a "certain country" (Morocco). His suggestion to the representatives of the Jewish Agency in that country that they agree to give over the handling of religious children to an independent body which would take care of their immigration and resettlement was met with outright refusal. His attempt to contact directly parents of children who would be immigrating did not succeed because of the dangerous conditions in that everything was cloaked in secrecy and it was difficult to know who was leaving. He did visit the Moroccan rabbis and enlightened them with the bitter truth that in to the degree that their communities gave their children over the Jewish Agency, and not to religious people, the succeeding generation would be lost to Judaism. Gatherings to explain this were organized, and the outcry was great. The parents opened their eyes to what was being done to their children, and registration of youth to go to Israel was almost completely halted. This was a tremendous trial for the parents.

Parents who sent their children with the transports did it mostly for security reasons. But there were also those who did it out of concern for the proper education of their children. The religious order of the Jewish schools in Morocco was thus: schools of the "Alliance" of secular French extraction funded by the government with a student body of 50,000 children estranged from religious Judaism; schools of the Otzar HaTorah network which were funded in part by the Joint which

contained 12,000 students; the schools "Oholei Yosef Yitzchok Lubavitch" which were funded by the office of Lubavitch in Brooklyn, and because of lack of funds only 5,000 boys and girls learned there. This situation created much difficulty for parents who wished to give their children a true Jewish education, and, therefore many naively gave their children over to the Jewish Agency, wanting to assure them of a good education.

Dr. Moshe R. showed them that it was exactly the opposite. By giving their children to representatives of the Agency, they were sealing their fate to be secularly educated since the Agency's promises to settle them in religious places in Israel were not kept. At his initiative, the Moroccan rabbis organized assemblies to explain this. They spoke on Rosh HaShona in Casablanca, Meknes and other cities to arouse parents so that they would not relinquish their children to the Jewish Agency, since this meant saving the body at the price of burning the soul, and it is stated, "It is worse to cause one to sin than to kill him."

When Dr. Mosh R. returned to Switzerland, there was a central rescue convention with representatives of all the religious communities: Zurich, Lucerne, Lugano, Basel and Geneva. Mr. Akiva Keshet of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency in Geneva was also present.

The atmosphere was stormy; Mr. Keshet's attempts to justify the handling of the children with reasons of "security" and the need for secrecy which were unavoidable because of the conditions involved in the mysterious immigration were met with anger. The meeting appointed a committee of representatives of all communities and religious circles which was responsible for working toward saving these children spiritually. They devised two methods to accomplish their goal:

1. They could cooperate with Aliyat HaNoar by accepting its promise of a Jewish education for the children, and when the Aliyat HaNoar failed to fulfill its promise, they would expose its schemes;
2. They establish an independent organization of

Immigration for Religious Youth (Aliyat HaNoar HaDati) which would handle directly the transporting of children from a "certain country" to Israel. A limited committee was established then, headed by Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, Dean of the Yeshiva in Lucerne at the time, and Dr. P. Rothschild, Sh. Schwartz, Yaakov Pines (assistant chairman of the Zionist Organization of Switzerland), Y. Werimosohn and V. Rosengarten -- varied representation of all walks of Judaism.

The representative of the Agency, Mr. Keshet, who was worried about disruptions to the funding of Aliyat HaNoar, tried to sway the committee from their plan and made it seem as if the Agency were ready to cooperate with religious Jews, but was not equipped to handle such difficult smuggling operations. (There is no earlier indication that the children had to be smuggled.) To the question of whether the Agency would allow religious people to work in "that country" and in the transport camps in Marseilles and en route to Israel, Keshet answered in the affirmative, providing the people were nondenominational and would be capable of handling spiritual and moral problems among the immigrants. At that time, the stream of immigrants had risen to 20,000 a month, at the rate of 700 a day, who were arriving at Marseilles. Some sailed from there immediately to Israel, and many remained in the immigration camp temporarily and needed guidance and religious necessities. At the end of the meeting, they had officially agreed with the representatives of the Agency that representatives of the religious community in Switzerland would travel to Morocco and choose religious children from among those slated to go to Israel. In accordance with the listing they would give, the children would be taken to Europe and would remain in the transit camp of the Agency for six months, where religious counselors would handle their education. After that they would be accompanied by the religious counselors to Israel and be settled in religious places. All this was to be funded by

Aliyat HaNoar on the condition that an independent religious organization would not be established.

Mr. Keshet even approved this agreement again in his letter to Dr. Daniel, dated October 4, 1961, in which he stated his obligation as follows:

"...A. Keshet must see to it that representatives of the religious community in Switzerland or their appointees who travel to Israel along with the immigrants will be allowed to come in direct contact with the immigrants, especially with the children assigned to Aliyat HaNoar until they appear in Israel before the classification committee. **The children will be resettled in the religious centers of Aliyat HaNoar.**" (Italics added).

This last sentence is already a step backward from his previous commitment at the Zurich convention. We will return further on to ascertain to what degree Mr. Keshet fulfilled his "obligation". This "revised" promise was authorized by Mr. Duvdany in a telegram he sent to Dr. Daniel, saying:

"Authorizing the agreement: liaison man: Akiva Keshet in Geneva- Aliyah."

The committee of Switzerland began working with those active in Pe'ylim in Israel and with a special committee appointed by the heads of Agudath Israel in the U.S. by Rabbi Aharon Kotler, of blessed memory, to save the children of North Africa, who asked that experienced, G-d fearing counselors of Moroccan background be sent, for they would be capable of dealing with the immigrants. The counselors of Pe'ylim never arrived for some reason and only the representative of Rabbi Kotler materialized. His student, Rabbi Ederi, who was Moroccan-born and a graduate of the Sunderland and Lakewood Yeshivos, was sent to the transit camp at Marseilles together with additional religious counselors. His first account was shocking. He told of the terrible extent of the deceit played upon the immigrants in

regard to their religious future and that of their children in Israel. Through the influence of this counselor, the immigrants stood up for their right of "self-classification" and refused to sign the "document of giving over authority" to those in charge of immigration. Because of this, their trip was delayed and the camp director tried in every way possible to get rid of the religious counselors -- proof that they were doing good work.

The organization of "Ohel-Yosef-Novardek" in Fublein (France) bought at the time a large castle in Marseilles in which those religious children who were to come would be housed before they continued to Israel. The Swiss committee demanded of the Agency fulfillment of the agreement and permission for the religious counselors to accompany the children to Israel, but to no avail. Mr. Keshet of Geneva sent them to Mr. Duvdany of Paris, and the latter argued that the Agency would have nothing to do with inciters and "shleimiels" like these people from Novardek who ignore the dangerous working conditions and endanger the lives and well-being of its workers.

Dr. Daniel notified the Agency's representative in the name of the committee that to the degree that the agreement regarding religious counselors was not kept it would be necessary to work through an independent immigration service which would naturally be funded separately. Now a new agreement was signed by the two parties, according to which religious representatives would handle the immigration of children and bring them to Israel by themselves. This would be funded by the Agency, with the condition that the channeling of children to organizations be done in cooperation with Aliyat HaNoar and not by the committee itself. The Agency's representative asked for two months' time (due to political difficulties) until the immigration was in process. Meanwhile, they would provide this service for religious Jewry, basing it on lists of children that would be given to them. They promised that the entire matter

would be arranged, but just needed Shragai's approval. "Just don't make any noise," they pleaded non-stop. "The tumult would damage the whole affair" (and perhaps the United Jewish Appeal?).

When it was time to translate the agreement into practical terms, when the Agency was asked to fund the immigration costs of religious children as it had promised, Keshet telegraphed Dr. Daniel on February 19, 1960, that "in accordance with instructions from Jerusalem we cannot, to our dismay, cover the costs of the children's immigration as long as Rabbi Kotler does not approve the agreement presented by Mr. Shragai in his letter to the rabbi." Rabbi Kotler, of blessed memory, had to agree at the end with Mr. Shragai's conditions with all of their ramifications.

To the committee from Zurich it was clear from the start that they could not wait two entire months in order to receive approval for they knew that the Agency would not live up to its commitments. In addition, the demand of P'eylim had been intensified to organize an independent immigration service immediately and to fight openly Aliyat HaNoar in every field (and to begin with: the United Jewish Appeal which was underway during that holiday time) in order to stop this soul-snatching once and for all. To make it even more clear the P'eylim said that they had at their disposal 230 absorption centers and if needed, there will be no dearth of additional places. It was decided to work on both fronts simultaneously. The representatives of the "committee" in Zurich went to Morocco for the purpose of checking the possibility of acting and at the same time to see how the Agency was living up to its word.

At a secret meeting with Moroccan rabbis, it became clear to the representatives from Zurich that under present conditions and the tense, fearful atmosphere of that time it would be difficult to receive permission from new religious parents to let

their children immigrate under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, based on its promise to the community leaders of Switzerland. The rabbi of Meknes, Rabbi Refoel Boruch Toledano, publicly declared his view that Moroccan Jews would be able to remain faithful to Judaism only if they settled in Israel in independent settlements in their original atmosphere and not if they were interspersed within other communities, even religious ones. Any change in their lives would upset their stability, he said. Dr. Daniel obtained a list of a large group of children, students of Otzar HaTorah who were listed before this and were preparing to immigrate through the Agency. He went to the director of Aliyat HaNoar with the demand to see the group of religious children under the "committee's" jurisdiction and to carry out the conditions of the agreement: to notify the "committee" the moment they arrived in Marseilles in order to have a religious counselor join them. But the people of the Agency purposely ignored their promise and completely concealed the fate of the religious children, justifying themselves with the most absurd reasons.

There remained no other choice but, at the end of a period of two months, to organize an independent immigration. For reasons which are understood, it is impossible to tell in detail the varied activities of this secret immigration which involved not only huge sums of money but much danger and cooperation with experts in this field. It is enough to say -- based on official facts and true testimony -- that the moment the members of the Agency found out that a group of children was on the way, they did not back down from using any means to foil them, and in so doing endangered the lives of the children, and caused the arrest of their counselors. The children who arrived at the shores of a neighboring country with no documents were in a hopeless situation when faced with the Agency's refusal to send any aid and to allow them to be handed over to the police. But after an exhausting debate, those in charge of the immigration agreed to

have thirty-seven children accompanied by a religious counselor join a group of immigrants sailing to Israel. But, a few days later, those active in Israel were told that the ship anchored in Haifa and, of thirty-seven religious children, only seventeen arrived while the rest had been put together with the other children by the soul-snatchers who found new ways to overcome the obstacle in their path: the religious counselor. Another operation was more successful in which eighteen youngsters who had "official" visas were brought to Israel accompanied by Rabbi Ederi who went with them through the absorption camp in Napoli and with difficulty escaped the decree of banishment by the secular directors.

The struggle continued against Aliyat HaNoar and worsened daily. The Agency was warned once again by the committee from Zurich who were once again given dreamy promises. At that time Rabbi Kotler, of blessed memory, returned from his trip to Israel and called for a large meeting of P'eyli Europe in London and inspired them to organize an independent group for immigration. At his suggestion, two of his students who were from the Toras Emes Yeshiva of Gateshead traveled to the "country" where they were immigrating from and organized a group of eighty girls and boys who were discerned to be religious and eligible for immigration. The preparations were made in utmost secrecy. With the help of a well-known professor in the University of Rabat who had friendly ties with Muhammed, King of Morocco, all formal arrangements were taken care of and one night the children took a chartered flight to Marseilles. According to the plan, they were to take another flight directly to Israel; but here they encountered difficulties -- planted there by "interested" factors -- due to the cancellation of the charter flight by the government. They were forced to use an El Al flight, and because of this the children were moved to Switzerland. The Israeli consul refused to give the children

entry permits with the excuse that he had no orders from Israel. Urgent telegrams were sent. Mr. Shragai telegraphed that the children were under his protection and wanted to supply them with entry permits -- in vain; it was politics. The Israeli Consulate in Switzerland added new obstacles. Temporarily, the children were placed in the "WZO" building in Morgantz.

Finally, the iron will of the committee surmounted all the difficulties. The visas were approved, and the children finally arrived in Lod with the Israeli police waiting impatiently to see if Yossele Shumacher¹ was among the passengers.

The matter still did not end. There was one more transport of twenty children. Altogether 150 children were brought to Israel by this independent immigration. They were absorbed after much difficulty by different organizations and saved for Torah-true Jewry. Because of lack of places, more were not brought over. The activity was stopped, and since then hundreds and thousands of children from North Africa have gone straight into the arms of secular education -- with no intervention.

Aliyat HaNoar vented its anger on the institutions which absorbed the children of the independent immigration. They conducted a propaganda campaign in world papers against those who organized the operation. The Jewish Agency printed in American newspapers, by means of the Jewish Telegraphic agency, that those active were not capable of getting places to absorb the children and that the first group of children to arrive in Israel were suffering under terrible conditions since they were housed in yeshivos. Moshe Kol notified officially that any organization which would take in even one child from the independent immigration from Switzerland would have the support of the Aliyat HaNoar withdrawn even from children who had been there beforehand. (This was the reason that the

¹ This refers to the celebrated Yossele Schumacher case (1960) of a young child whose

quota of places was not filled.) At the same time, Aliyat HaNoar told the press that the religious institutions were not able to absorb the children since no one was financing them. When the committee members of Switzerland asked for the sum of 70,000 francs from the Jewish Agency, in accordance with agreements given verbally and in telegrams with representatives of the Agency and in Mr. Shragai's letter to Rabbi Aharon Kotler, of blessed memory, Mr. Shragai dismissed them with a scowl: "I didn't promise, I didn't agree, and you will not receive one penny!" Those people who personally worked with the transporting of children were subjected to suffering through the harassment they encountered. Some were fired, some were arrested and tortured -- and let this suffice. The rest of the details of this undermining work are carved upon the faces of hundreds and thousands of children who are in Israel today and belong not to us but to our enemies.

This is a factual summary of a painful chapter, and a bloody one, of the hopeless battle over the religious image of the children of North Africa who were kidnapped by those with pagan beliefs from the arms of Judaism. And the sad moral of this tragic episode from several aspects -- both internal and external -- is a topic by itself and material for serious thought on the part of any individual who still considers himself part of the Jewish people. The turbulent blood of those North African children who were coerced into heresy has not yet found peace. The children of North Africa accuse everyone -- and also us!

grandfather, Rabbi Nachman Shiarakes, had given over to religious people in order to save him from his atheistic parents. The old man was placed in Zionist jails for years, as was his son, Sholem, and many other Orthodox Jews who helped him teach Yossele. The Zionists had the entire "Mosad" -- Israeli Intelligence Service out looking for the child for two years, spending millions of dollars, just to corrupt one other child away from his faith.

This, however, was not the end of the Moroccan episode. After the swift Zionist victory in the 1967 war, the Zionists began another mass *aliyah*. They exploited the situation between Arabs and Jews in North Africa for their own advantage. The Arabs were naturally angry at having been defeated by the Zionists. In Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, there were sporadic outbursts against the indigenous Jews. The Zionists realized that they could use this to influence North African Jews to emigrate from their homelands. They portrayed themselves as rescuers of persecuted Jews.

As they had done many times before, during other *aliyahs*, they told the Moroccan Jewish parents to give them their children first for immigration. The parents could follow later after they had disposed of their property and whatever possessions they could not take with them on the journey. This scheme allowed the Zionists to begin to turn the religious children against Judaism while they were away from their parents' influence.

There was an outcry from world Jewry upon learning of this latest in a series of Zionist coercions. In 1968 major campaigns were launched by Orthodox Jewry especially by Neturei Karta, against the Zionists.

Agudath Israel was caught in the middle of this foray. As is known, Agudath Israel was founded as an anti-Zionist organization. But its original goals and ideals were gradually eroded from within. Some of the Agudah leaders began to deal with the Zionists as early as the time of the Teheran children's affair in the early 1940's. They compromised their ideals in order to receive money for the maintenance of the few children they received at that time. They also compromised by taking an active part in the government of the newly-established state of Israel. By becoming part of the government and working with the Zionists, they lost their right to criticize the Zionist dealings and

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כ"ד בשבט תשכ"ח
23 באדר א' 1968

לכבוד
הרב שלמה לוריא
המחלקה אגודת ישראל העולמית
ירושלים.

לכבוד
הרב יצחק טאור לויין
המחלקה אגודת ישראל העולמית
ירושלים.

מכוברי,

הבנני שתכבדו לאשר קבלת מהתנבם אלי מכ"ג בשבט תשכ"ח,
לחודר יעמך שרפתי לפני את חוכנך.

לאור השיחה שניהלנו הנני מסכם ארזה במפורט כדלהלן:

1. תוקם וועדת אר-הוק שהמקוריה יהיו: לברוך אה התלונות על סידורם של הילדים אשר הניעו דרך עליית-הנוער או ביתר עם משפחתם, ושל הגורע שלמלה מגיל 16, ובמידה שלש לתקן את העבר ולהעביר אותם למסורות דתיות - היא תעשה זאת.

2. כיו אגודת-ישראל (שהם יציעו).
כיו אגודת-ישראל (שהם יציעו).

3. הוטם קקדנות, שאיש אשר ירוע כיו אגודת-ישראל -
ותאיים לכן - בהתאם לכדיקה במסורות המוסמכים, ייעלה לחתיל
בכיו להצטרף לבורת העלייה המועד במקום.

4. כל אלה העולים שיחיימו למסורות אגודת-ישראל יוספו למסורת
אלו או לשינויים של אגודת-ישראל.

5. היות שניסוח השאלה בענין ההסתברות: "הדתית" או
"כללית" עלולה להסעות, טובם כשני הצדדים יעיינו בדבר הגדרה
דומה, במקום "כללית".

בכבוד רב,

ל"א סיון תשכ"ח

ל"א סיון תשכ"ח

GENOCIDE IN THE HOLY LAND

AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA

Shvat 24, 5728/Brochos 26
February 23, 1968CONFIDENTIAL MEMO TO VAAD HANHALARE: Moroccan Children Aliyah

We wish to inform you that we received a telephone report last night (Thursday) from Israel about a conference held yesterday by Rabbi I. M. Lewin and Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz of Agudath Israel with Jewish Agency Chairman Pincus and Aliyat Hanoar Director Artzi, concerning the problem of the secret Aliyah that is bringing children from Morocco to the Holy Land. This was the second conference in recent days between these two Agudah leaders and the heads of the Aliyat Hanoar, except that this time the Jewish Agency chairman also participated.

We will send you next week a complete report about the full dimension of this problem as well, and all the details of these negotiations to help solve this problem in a constructive way. The Agudath Israel leadership is not only interested in making certain that any of the religious children who had already been placed in a non-religious institution should be transferred to a religious home, but also wants to make certain that a guaranteed method be established to prevent the recurrence of such inexcusable action by the Aliyat Hanoar.

At yesterday's meeting the Jewish Agency agreed, for the first time in all these years of controversy, that a representative of Agudath Israel will be coopted to the Classification Commission, which determines which children are religious and to what institution they should be sent. This Classification Commission (which will consist of three other members, of whom one represents Mizrachis) will not only decide the designation of future immigrant children; it will also immediately make a thorough investigation of each recently-arrived child, in order to transfer to religious institutions those religious children who were absorbed in a non-religious Kibbutz.

Furthermore two Torah institutions will now be recognized by the Aliyat Hanoar for absorption of the children above the age of fifteen. Finally, it was agreed that the Jewish Agency will accept the recommendations of a 'shliach' that Agudath Israel will send to Morocco, and all the expenses of the children that this religious 'shliach' will recommend will be covered by the Jewish Agency, in the same manner as they treat other children.

The Agudist leadership views this agreement as a major forward-step, but with the caution of experience, which demands extreme watchfulness to make certain that this agreement is fully kept by the Jewish Agency. The next few weeks, when this agreement will have to be implemented, will determine whether the Jewish Agency is sincerely willing to cooperate with Agudath Israel in order to find a meaningful solution to a problem that has plagued Orthodoxy for many years. We are rushing this confidential information to you, in order to keep you informed, and will send you a more detailed report next week.

they lost their freedom to maintain their pure ideals. This was not true of all of Agudath Israel leaders -- some, such as Rabbi Moshe Schonfeld, of blessed memory, attempted to keep the Agudah on the right track and to fight the Zionists. Even in 1967, Agudath Israel still had many anti-Zionists among its ranks; but it also had those who had compromised themselves with the Zionists.

Thus, at the time of this mass aliyah from Morocco, the Agudah leadership had to appease Torah-true Jewry while they were dealing with the Zionists again behind the backs of the religious Jews. They received a letter from the Jewish Agency, reprinted here, which they proceeded to "interpret" in a confidential memo to the Agudah Board of Directors. Moshe Sherer, the Executive President of Agudath Israel in America, was the author of this masterful piece of obfuscation.

Several points may be made about this memo which was sent to quiet the outcry of Orthodox Jewry. By mentioning that the phone call was received only on the previous night, it appears that they are acting quickly in the matter in order to save the religious children. As was mentioned, they were already dealing with the Zionists.

The "complete report" on the situation, which was to detail the negotiations, was never sent.

No "guaranteed method... to prevent the recurrence of such inexcusable action by the Aliyat Hanoar" ever materialized.

No "Classification Commission" to determine where the children should be sent was ever established. Indeed, the Jewish Agency did not promise to establish such a commission. They only stated in the letter that one might be formed. Nor was Agudath Israel promised representation on such a commission. The memo also states that three other members would be on this imaginary commission, including one from Mizrachis, as if to indicate that there would be two religious members. After reading Rabbi Schonfeld's indictment of the Mizrachis in The

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Teheran Children Accuse, we realize that this would hardly appease Orthodox Jewry. In fact, the Mizrachi began working with the Zionists many years before this memo was sent.

The **shliach** (messenger) which Sherer says Agudath Israel would send to Morocco to investigate the matter was to have had his trip paid for by the Jewish Agency. Also, by saying that the Jewish Agency would pay the expenses of the religious children, Agudath Israel again exposes itself as dealing with the Zionists. For as soon as this would be allowed, the Jewish Agency would feel free to place the children wherever they wished to place them. But, aside from this, the letter from the Jewish Agency did not say that they would send a **shliach** of Agudah, but only agreed in "in principle", nor does it say that they would definitely pay the children's expenses as if that would save the situation. Rather, the letter was full of "maybes" -- maybe they would establish a commission, maybe they would send a **shliach**, one Agudah man among many Zionists, maybe they would pay the children's expenses.

This memo is evidence of Agudath Israel's "sell-out" to the Zionists. Although it was sent to appease Orthodox Jewry, in fact it merely shows the depth of the corruption within the Agudah leadership.

The result was that thousands more children were lost to Judaism because of the cooperation and collaboration of the Agudah and the Zionists. All parties declared all is well, while at the same time thousands of children who had attended "Otzar HaToroah" and "Lubavitcher" schools in Morocco were being systematically torn away from the faith of their parents.

A STORY OF ONE TOWN-UPPER NAZARETH

We have already chronicled the all-pervasive power of the Zionists over the lives of immigrants in the transit camps and absorption places. But they also wielded power in some of the established villages and towns as well. The following is a translation of a booklet originally published in Hebrew in 1965 by P'eylim of the United States. It details the incidents of anti-religious coercion by the Zionists against religious immigrants in the town of Upper Nazareth. Their hatred of religion ran so deep that they even destroyed synagogues.

What is understood and accepted by everybody, that a father has the right to educate his child however he wishes -- in a public school, religious public school or private religious school -- is not understood at all in Upper Nazareth. There the council president and the secretaries of every government agency -- the local council, Jewish Agency, police, relief agency, workers union and so on -- purport to be masters over the souls and consciences of the citizens, to have the power to decide which education their children should have, who should be in charge in the synagogue, and even if there is one at all.

The Incidents in a Village

Upper Nazareth is basically a city of new immigrants, a part of the plan to put Jews in the Galil. It has 15,000 inhabitants, 10,000 of whom are from Romania, 3,000 from Morocco and an additional 2,000 from Poland.

This town of immigrants was constructed like a city so that in a period of time it would become a center for immigrants. Situated on a beautiful hill, it overlooks the old city of Nazareth below, with its 30,000 Christian and Moslem inhabitants.

The immigrants who came during the first years of the State's existence would have been very lucky if their conditions had been the same as those immigrants of today, many of whom are settling in Nazareth. They immediately receive nice apartments, furniture, jobs, schooling, etc.

On the surface, the village is quiet and peaceful, but

underneath it is a tempest! For many months it has made the newspapers' headlines. A harsh inner quarrel has eroded its life -- not one over honor or representation, not one over property or standing, but a sharp and profound argument over content and character, spiritual freedom and freedom of conscience, a battle over the humble aspirations of thousands of sincere Jews to practice their religion in the land of their fathers, a battle over the desire to live a life observing the Torah and its commandments.

Jews who came from various countries where they suffered because of their being Jews and belonging to a people which sanctifies the Name of G-d have been pulled upon coming to Israel into such a depressing storm, until they ask themselves bitterly: Is this why we came here? Is this what we awaited so impatiently?

Their days here are saddening. Just a short distance from them, at the foot of their town, sprawls the Christian city with its thousands of Christian and Moslem inhabitants, who have absolute freedom. No one intervenes in their affairs of faith, no one tells them how to live. But the Jews, for whom the state was supposedly established, have been denied the right to live as they please, a right for which many a tear was shed because of its absence or limitations in the countries which they had left to finally come to the Holy Land.

Perhaps the whole painful drama of Upper Nazareth would have remained hidden, if not for the incident of Mrs. Rina Eitani.

While a case of alleged discrimination against a woman who considered herself a Jew but had a Christian mother was being investigated, the actual persecution of religious Jews in Upper Nazareth was revealed. The woman, Rita Eitani, was not recognized as a Jew by a local rabbi because her mother was not Jewish. The Zionists tried to use this incident against the

religious Jews, thereby discrediting their claims that they were being denied basic rights by the Zionists. It became evident that the anti-religion coercion machine, whose beginnings were with the "Teheran Children" and peaked at the establishment of the state, was working here quietly and securely.

The education a Jew is interested in giving his children is the key to his existence. A person who gives his children a secular education, devoid of any spark of tradition or Torah, is assured livelihood and all privileges; but he who "dares" to continue his way of life and give his children a religious education is doomed to loss of livelihood, and hunger and methodical persecution.

The city government will generously support vague "cultural" needs, such as movies, a theatre, sports and the like, but closes its purse strings when asked to support the building of a synagogue. They will give as much as possible for a Reform Temple, a tragic caricature of a synagogue which profanes the Sabbath and everything holy, but reveal the extent of their hatred and miserliness when asked to support a true synagogue at the wish and request of the citizens.

But the small minded bureaucrats of the town did not take into consideration the fact that it is impossible to lead the new immigrants as a community of blind followers with no independent will.

There are those who are opening their eyes to the true tragedy of the situation. The important fact that these immigrants are battling for their rights is telling: they do not bow easily to red tape, and there are among them those who are not succumbing to the pressure of unemployment and hunger, as long as they can save their children from a secular education which leaves them bereft of any spark of Torah and its commandments.

The Official Frightens

One of the rabbis sent by P'eylim of the U.S. to

Nazereth in order to speak in one of the synagogues on timely matters of Torah went to the house of the shochet (ritual slaughterer) in order to ask him to arrange for him to speak and to decide on an appropriate time.

After their discussion, the rabbi rose to leave. Suddenly, he saw the shochet turn pale and rush to the window to pull down the shade. The shochet peeked through the shade, and after a few minutes turned to the rabbi saying: "Now you can leave."

It became clear that the shochet became upset upon seeing one of the officials of the local council pass by his window: he was afraid he would suffer the consequences if the official would see a bearded rabbi in his house.

There is no place for a Temple of G-d

Thousands of Jews, as we have said, live in Upper Nazareth. In the lands they came from, they never skipped a day of going to the synagogue. How natural it seemed to them that when they came to Israel they would have no difficulty going three times daily to a place of worship in order to pray to G-d and thank Him for being able to settle in His chosen country.

The officials of Upper Nazareth saw to it from the start that this wish was not granted. They knew well that these settlers would be observant and would prefer one synagogue to several clubs. Yet, since their plan from the start was to secularize them, instead of building synagogues and study halls, they built a three-story building with a seating capacity of 1000 for the Histadrut and worker's council. Mapai built for itself a 600-seat capacity building; two movie houses were built with hundreds of seats; six 24 hour-a-day clubs were built, as was a magnificent structure for secular youth. There were also sports fields and stadiums for games, but not ONE SYNAGOGUE!

The town officials know full well that a synagogue will not

serve their purposes, will not contribute to their "holy" task of creating from these settlers a "new people." Movie houses of dubious moral character, clubs for every idle pastime, sports fields -- all these would have the desired effect on the settlers, especially the youth.

But the residents fight this with all their strength. They possess a strong will to live a full Torah life in their dwelling places, and therefore are forced to use empty apartments as synagogues. Their appearance is very decrepit and causes grief to all those who see them, especially when compared to the magnificence of the assorted cultural edifices.

Yet even these apartments and buildings are maintained with difficulty. The congregants suffer much from the officials of Amidar and the local council. The Amidar Company, which owns the buildings, demands that they move away from those buildings set aside as synagogues because they have no permission from the local council to use them -- and the local council refuses to give them the necessary permission.

The local council is strongly opposed to any central synagogue in the town as is befitting the large population. The head of the council prefers -- since he has no other choice -- the establishment of several small places of prayer, which would assure his control over them, rather than one central synagogue where his control would be lost.

He does not want any synagogues, but if they have to exist he wishes to derive from them the maximum benefit. He therefore interferes in the matter of appointing secretaries through whom he wields influence. Of fifteen synagogues existing in private apartments or apartments which were taken over, he has power over seven. He appoints secretaries who are given orders to watch carefully over three most "important" matters: 1) That there be no political announcements such as declaring a vow (fast) of silence, learning daily Mishne and the

like; 2) that the rabbis (the local rabbi included) do not "dare" to speak for religious education; 3) that they do not use the synagogues as Talmud Torahs for afternoon hours for children who are finished with their studies.

The work of these secretaries is helped by the local council in that the buildings are kept up more or less for the purpose of a house of prayer. They remove dividers between the men's and women's sections. They repair things. But woe to the other synagogues -- eight in number (now only five because three were intentionally destroyed) -- they are excommunicated, they have no financial support, no legal permit to exist where they are: for this is how the head of the council wants it, and everything is done according to his wishes.

At the same time the head of the council revealed his generosity for the needs of the Reform movement. The Reform congregation is very negligible but the Reform synagogue serves the head of the council's purpose very well, for it preaches desecration of the Sabbath and profaning all that is holy. The members of this movement received a synagogue from the Amidar Company. They chose their site intentionally near four other synagogues so that hundreds of congregants are insulted every Sabbath when the Reform congregants arrive by car, and other means which desecrate the Sabbath, to their place of prayer and have their services accompanied by an organ.

Hundreds of congregants of the surrounding synagogues sent their representatives to the Amidar Company to investigate why a building was given to the Reform movement whose members are so few in number, while other synagogues with tens and hundreds of congregants are not allowed to use its buildings. The answer given was that, while the local council refuses to authorize these other synagogues, it has authorized the Reform synagogue. It seems that this is the height of poor taste and harassment; the head of the local council did not even

bother to respond to letters of protest from the Council for the Holiness of the Sabbath.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to quote a paragraph from the letter of the congregants of the synagogue of Rabbi Shlomo Bar Breiro which was sent to central people in the government. They write bitterly:

"We came to Israel two years ago and received housing in Upper Nazareth. Since we are observant Jews and had no synagogue in our neighborhood, we used an empty apartment: we brought in Torah scrolls and made a synagogue and a religious school for our children.

"Despite the fact that our synagogue has people occupied with the study of the Torah from morning to night, the head of the local council refuses to endorse our synagogue. Because of this Amidar is causing us trouble.

"It is worthwhile to note that in the city center there is a Reform synagogue which is closed on the Sabbath from week to week. They received authorization from the local council, yet we, because we are observant, do not receive authorization.

"Why is there discrimination between groups of citizens? Does one who believes in G-d and his Torah have no part in the state of Israel?"

The Scandal Involving Destruction of Three Synagogues

This affair of harassing citizens regarding synagogues reached its peak this Kislev when one hundred workers and criminals appeared at dawn near the huts of the religious school and raised their hammers and other tools to destroy totally without mercy the huts that served for four years as the synagogue and religious school for the observant Jews of Upper Nazareth. This destruction was done with no consideration for the honor of the Holy Arks or Torah scrolls in them. Congregants who were alerted to the news were shaken by the

sight before their eyes: The supplies and Torah scrolls were piled up in dirt and dust.

Mordechai Alon, head of the local council, was personally in charge of the destruction, as was secretary of the workers' council, Menachem Airav and Moshe Cohen, a member of the local council who worked with the management of real estate in Israel.

The principle reason given by Alon was that since a new building had been built for the religious school it was not necessary to have the huts. But he had no answer to the serious complaint: why was no central synagogue built until now, in spite of the large number of religious inhabitants, in spite of the large number of congregants praying in private houses or other inappropriate places?

The religious citizens of Upper Nazareth suffered a long time until they were finally granted an appropriate building for a religious school. All these years, they held classes in miserable huts while the secular schools were housed in beautiful buildings years ago. This fact did not undermine the religious school in the least. Not one of the parents would be enticed by the nice buildings of the secular school. When the school building was finally built, the head of the council tried to get out of handing it over for its designated purpose. This was discovered by the religious citizenry; they stopped learning sessions and organized a demonstration until the building would be given to them. They were immediately called to the police, where the officer informed them that they had violated the law and would be tried. Only if they stopped the strike would he do them a "favor" -- i.e. withdraw charges.

Since when is a demonstration illegal? Is it prohibited to organize a demonstration in the state of Israel?

Coercion of Religious Parents to Give Their Children a Secular Education

One of the most painful chapters in the anti-religious crusade in Upper Nazareth is undoubtedly the official coercion of religious parents to threaten and frighten them and prevent enrollment of their children in the religious school. In this matter all means were justified, and this dark purpose was engrained in the minds of the officials of the local council, the workers' council, the Jewish Agency, the relief council and even the police force.

It seems that of all the tortured imaginings of the immigrants, this was the most frightening: being deprived of work and of food, in order to be blackmailed into giving their children a secular education.

In this matter the "words" were very methodical, original and far reaching. The "parents committee" of the secular school, under the management of the small local dictatorship, turned enthusiastically to the new immigrants telling them not to be talked into sending their children to religious school, G-d forbid, but "to register their children in public school (religious public school is not secular enough obviously!) which is the educational institution of the Jewish people!"

Hand in hand with this, there is also a "Department of Education" of the workers council which takes care of sending a letter to parents whose children have reached school age with these words:

"Upon your son (daughter's) reaching school age, the Department of Education of our council congratulates you and wishes that you be privileged to raise and educate a son (daughter) faithful to the state, the family and the workers' movement -- and that they be a source of pride.

"Our Department of Education, whose office is in the

Histadrut building in Upper Nazareth, is at your service for advice and guidance and hopes to see you in the above office.

"Our heartfelt congratulations upon this important occasion.

"With faithful greetings

"The Council of Workers of Nazareth
"Department of Education"

Here one must note that it is prohibited for a rabbi in Israel to advise his congregants to give their children a religious education, in accordance with the explicit law of the Department of Education and Culture, but this does not include, it seems, the "workers' council" which is above the state and the law.

The "workers' council" is the most active in this criminal area. Its officials are intensively occupied with blackmailing citizens, threatening them and carrying out threats in the form of depriving them of work and food: they are not afraid of any dirty work in order to achieve this aim.

This is illustrated in a signed declaration by Michael Hershkovitz, an immigrant from Romania:

Declaration: "I, Michael Hershkovitz, of Upper Nazareth, block 95/10, a new immigrant from Romania, father of five children, all of whom attend a religious government school, declare today that on May 1, 1963 I received an invitation from the Histadrut workers' council of Upper Nazareth that the secretary, Menachem Ariav, wished to speak to me at 7 P.M. My wife went in my place to the Histadrut and saw that they had also called a few other religious parents.

"In the Histadrut they began to malign the religious school with all kinds of lies and tale-bearing. They said the Sephardic children were from Africa and were uncivilized and dirty, and therefore they learn in the religious school. They said we must

take our children out of the religious school. My wife would not agree to this and replied to them that if they did not learn there then they would not be intellectuals, but they would be good and religious workers.

"I would like to note that two years ago I worked at the village of "Solel Boneh" and because I registered my children in religious school, I was fired. Since then, I have had very scarce work and earn approximately 150 Liras per month.

"Upper Nazareth, May 7, 1963

"Hershkovitz, Michael"

Bitter was the lot of those who, because of accidents or poor health, could not do regular work and needed light work in accordance with their limited physical capabilities. These people were dreadfully taken advantage of for the purpose of secularizing minds. Two declarations will illustrate this practice.

Here is the declaration of Mr. Oishi Adel, which shows the extent of the cruelty to which he was subjected.

"Oishi Adel, a new immigrant, citizen of Upper Nazareth, block 11/6 identification certificate no. 2/690255. I am turning to your honor with the following request:

"I came to Israel from Romania January 16, 1962, together with my wife and my only son Boruch born to me when I was no longer young, who was nine years old. The boy is G-d-fearing and has been religious since birth. While other children play in the streets after school is over, he goes to the synagogue to listen to the learning and prayer. His aim and dream is to be a shochet or a rabbi. In the synagogue he always stands near the cantor, and all the congregants respect and like him very much.

"Three months ago, I was involved in an accident. I fell and broke my right arm which is still in a cast, preventing me from working. Since the accident did not occur in my place of work,

I receive no aid or relief payments, neither from the health insurance or national insurance. I and my household are living on 61 Liras which I receive from the welfare office. Since this sum is too small to support three people, I turned to the local Histadrut workers' council and asked for additional help.

"On Monday June 10, 1963, before noon, my wife and I were received by Menachem Ariav, secretary of the workers' council, in the Histadrut building. He told me he was willing to help me with money and a livelihood only under one condition: if I take my son out of the religious government school.

"These words were like a knife in my heart; since then I am sick at heart.

"I would like to note that I am not a member of the Religious National Party, and I was never in the offices of Mizrachi. I am simply a religious Jew who prays daily; on Sabbath I pray in the synagogue of the Histadrut workers' council.

"I asked, is it possible in the state of Israel, which is being built in the spirit of the Bible and the prophets' vision, to refuse help to a religious worker in need of it only because he wishes to educate his only son, who will say "kaddish" after his death, in the spirit of the Torah?

"Upper Nazareth, the 20th of Sivan, 5723

"With much respect

"Oishi Adel"

The lot of those who gave their children a secular education was better. Toward them, there were no excuses of "there is no work" and no demands to sell their children to the secular idol, since they had already done so. But it is the opposite with those who refuse to give in, and there is testimony of this in the signed declaration of Mr. Arzeran Nissim ben David.

Declaration: "I, the assigned, Arzeran Nissim ben David, citizen of Upper Nazareth, block 101/13, identification number

61926567, declare before two witnesses: Moshi Pasternak, head of the religious council and Mrs. Shalom Soisa, secretary of the religious council of Upper Nazareth, the following:

"I am the father of seven small children. I must support ten people because besides my wife and children, my widowed mother lives with me. I am working and earning very little; in a good month I earn maybe 180 Liras.

"Since I am a sick man -- I suffer from rheumatism and have only one eye -- my doctors forbade me to work in the sun. On the past Monday April 20, 1964, at 10 A.M., I asked the general organization of the workers' council of Upper Nazareth to give me easier work in the shade in accordance with the doctor's instructions.

"After I presented my request to Mr. Weitzman and Mr. Wakrat, officials of the organization, they answered me: "Since your children are in the religious government school, we cannot deal with your request." After this, they maligned the religious education and praised the general school. My cries of protest were to no avail. On Wednesday April 29, 1964, at 8 A.M., I went to see Menachem Ariav, secretary of the organization, but he too refused to help me and said: "We have no work for you."

"I would like to note that because my neighbor, Chaviv Doron, who also has seven children and is sick like I am and also has only one eye, took his children out of the religious government school and gave them over for a secular education, he received help from the Histadrut, good, easy work in the shade. He is working in a textile factory in Upper Nazareth, earning 250 Liras a month. Aside from this, he receives social service aid in the form of 30 Liras monthly from the Histadrut and 50 Liras from the welfare office. I do not receive even a penny from the welfare office; only my mother receives 25 Liras a month."

"I am turning to all the factors in Israel, all the officials, all

the rabbis and citizens and asking: Is it true that because I am a religious person, son of religious parents and I want to educate my children in the spirit of the Torah and tradition, the organization (Hisradut) of the workers' council does not have to help me? They do not have to have mercy on the father of seven children? I would like to know if what the Histadrut workers' council of Upper Nazareth is doing is in accordance with the law of our democratic state, or it is doing this independently?

"In any case, I ask all the factors in all manners of supplication to have pity on me and my children without tampering with my freedom of conscience or the sanctity of the faith in the Torah of Moses which is deeply rooted in my heart. "Nissim, Arzeran"

Anti-Religious War on all Fronts

Mordechai Alon, the head of the council, is a powerful influence in Upper Nazareth. Although anything religious is worthless in his eyes, if he has no choice and is forced by circumstances to uphold some religious matter, he uses it to his advantage. So he rules over seven synagogues, where he appoints the secretaries as he pleases and so too he is in charge of other religious matters.

For example, he accepts on his own, unauthorized shochtim, contrary to the will of the local rabbi. The shochtim of the religious council are forbidden entry to the slaughterhouse. There is someone else who sees to this on Alon's orders. Shochtim who have not been appointed by the head of the council, and they are the ones accepted by the majority of the religious community, are forced to do their work in the street.

The head of the council refuses to recognize the religious council. He established his own "religious committee", and here he renders the verdict which the committee approves. Alon desecrates the Sabbath openly, but he wears a Yarmulke. The

local rabbi, the esteemed Rabbi Pinchas Miller, is a thorn in his side. He would have preferred, it seems, to see someone in this position who is obsequious and will listen to those governing, not a person of spiritual stature who deals firmly with rabbinical matters the way Rabbi Miller does.

Rabbi Miller is himself a new immigrant and does his work faithfully. He organized the religious community, takes care of education and of upholding Torah study. It is easy to understand, then, that Rabbi Miller is an obstacle in the head of the council's path, in his aspiring to see Upper Nazareth a secular city devoid of any tie with the Torah of Israel and its tradition.

Therefore, he has already asked the Minister of Religion and the Chief Rabbinate three times to fire Rabbi Miller. The first time was when the rabbi prohibited eating from the local slaughterhouse after the shochet he appointed was chased away from the slaughterhouse by criminals and in his place came a shochet appointed by the Histadrut.

The second time Alon asked that the rabbi be fired was after he refused to enter a church at the time of the Pope's visit there. The third time was when the rabbi refused to give Rina Eitani the status of a Jew without proper halachic conversion.

The rabbi's stand was also the subject of haggling when an inter-party committee from Mapai and the National Religious Party (Mafdal) was sent in order to make peace. The residents heard fearfully of the attempts to compromise at the expense of the rabbi, but meanwhile the attempt to mediate failed so that this shameful plan was abandoned.

The "Holy War" Against Torah Study

Alon has another "holy war" with the Talmud Torah "Chesed L'Avraham" which has sessions in the afternoon. It has approximately fifty students who receive a good nutritious

meal after their studies, and it is funded by the Skulener Rebbe shlita of Brooklyn, N. Y.

The first question to arise when the Talmud Torah was established was, understandably, where it would be housed. The local rabbi, together with other publicly active local people, turned to the appropriate organizations, among them the local council, with a request for two housing units for this purpose. The head of the council, of course, gave a negative answer (at the same time he approved giving a beautiful structure over to the Reform movement to serve as a temple). Alon's refusal cannot be construed as anything but stubborn and blind hatred for anything religious, because otherwise he should have been thrilled to establish such a Talmud Torah, which would have kept the children occupied in the afternoon instead of leaving them free to roam the streets and become involved in crime -- of which this country has more than enough.

The people had no choice but to use the Sephardic Shul block 422/4, where they opened up afternoon classes for students. The opening of a Talmud Torah gladdened the hearts of many residents. Despite the outright poverty, there are over sixty residents who are participating in monthly donations for the upkeep of the Talmud Torah.

Alon called the members of the synagogue committee to his office and admonished them because they had not received permission to tear down the walls in the building in order to make it more usable as a synagogue. The secretaries admitted their guilt, but noted that this was done after the local council refused them the requested approval at the same time that it gave approval for a synagogue for congregants of a nonreligious sect. The head of the council "softened" and proposed to them: they would get the requested approval on the condition that

they abandon the Talmud Torah, remove the sign and get rid of the teachers and students.

The fight over the Talmud Torah has continued until the present time. The threat against the above mentioned secretaries has not stopped. At the beginning of this year, two criminal residents of the area appeared in the place -- at the service of the local council for "special operation" -- and chased away the teacher and students and did away with the Talmud Torah. The members of the committee turned to the police for aid, and the two criminals were called down to testify before the investigating police officer. They testified that they committed their actions under orders of the local council.

The congregants of the synagogue did not give in to crime. They renewed the Talmud Torah. The lock put on the door by one of the congregants who was working for the local council was removed by them, but the battle continues. The Talmud Torah sign which has the name of the founder, the Skulener Rebbe shlita -- a Jew who suffered prolonged imprisonment in Romania because of his devotion to Torah -- is the "battle front": from time to time it is found thrown on the ground, and then it is picked up and put back.

In this matter of the Talmud Torah, the housing office which seems to work together with the local council, was also involved. The local rabbi did not want the Talmud Torah housed in the synagogue without permission so he turned to the Inter-Office Committee of Upper Nazareth with a request to set aside two apartments for this. This request was sent to the housing office and the answer the rabbi received was the following:

"To Rabbi Miller

"Upper Nazareth

"Regarding your request for setting aside an apartment for a Talmud Torah.

"The Inter-Office Committee passed on to us your above mentioned request, and we are honored to inform you that since two apartments are being used as places of prayer, illegally and with no approval, as long as this situation continues, we find it impossible to deal with your request.

"Respectfully,

"Moshe Landau, Housing Office"

Rabbi Miller's answer was:

"I am astonished and protest your answer of April 2, 1963 regarding my request for two apartments for the use of the Talmud Torah. When plans were made for building Upper Nazareth, they saw to it that every neighborhood had a public building to be used as a shopping center, etc., and they did not concern themselves that every neighborhood have a place for prayer.

"We are entering in the seventh year in Upper Nazareth, and the housing office has not built one synagogue in the place. What is your opinion, Mr. Landau, if a new immigrant who is observant would arrive from Morocco or Romania and wish to pray with a congregation: must he wait seven years until there will be a synagogue in Upper Nazareth?"

"And if the Housing Office has not concerned itself with giving observant Jews a temporary place befitting a synagogue and they took over an empty apartment in order to pour out their hearts in prayer, who is responsible? This is called trespassing? The punishment you are giving -- not allowing Jewish children to study the Torah -- is something we have endured through a prolonged exile."

The next letter of Mr. Landau of the Housing Office tells of no change for the better. He answers shortly and drily as follows:

"The subject: Talmud Torah -- Upper Nazareth. The request of the above mentioned was brought before the

authorized committee, but to our sorrow we find no way to give a positive reply."

This is the lot of suffering of the religious residents of Upper Nazareth, for whom many factors have joined to prevent them from living their lives as they wish.

Here is the letter of Yosef Batito, which is a shocking document both in content and recitation of the facts:

"Declaration: I the assigned, Yosef Batito, resident of Upper Nazareth, block 42014, identification card no. 61783823, declare of my own good will and with witnesses and with full responsibility after having been warned legally to tell only the truth, the following:

"I came to Israel from Morocco over a year ago with my wife and seven children (the oldest of whom is 15). I am 57 years old. In Morocco I was a shochet (ritual slaughterer) and here I received no position, since in Upper Nazareth there are already shoctim. I was forced to do low paid work and earned up to 200 Liros a month.

"Since my situation and that of my family was very difficult, I turned to the head of the local council and the Welfare Office of Upper Nazareth; orally and also in writing, I asked for help for the children or work as a shochet.

"On September 1, 1964 I was called to the Welfare Office. There Eliyahu Veknin, an official of the Welfare Bureau, told me in Hebrew that I could receive work behooving a shochet -- under one condition: If I take my six children out of the religious government school and put them in the public school (and I must do this immediately, because on the first day of the school year one can still arrange this). Mr. Veknin said to me in these words, "If you want the head of the city to receive you and fulfill your requests, you must take your children out of the religious government school."

"Since my situation was so difficult and as a shochet I could

not accustom myself to physical labor, I agreed brokenheartedly and with much sorrow to do as he said. Mr. Veknin, official of the Welfare Office, went with me immediately to the Registration Office of the local council and stood by my side as I signed the transfer of my children over to the public school.

"After this, the above mentioned Eliyahu Veknin took me to the office of the head of the local council. The mayor, Mordechai Alon, received me nicely and presented me with work in the religious council: selling cards in the slaughterhouse. He said after a month or two he would give me a position as a shochet. Since I would not agree to this, not wanting to overstep boundaries and take someone else's position, Mr. Alon suggested to me another job as daytime guard of the Sephardic section to make sure that children do not break windows and trees.

"On September 12, 1964 I began to work, and my children, went to the public school called "Tabor." Two days later my children, who had received a traditional Torah education in my home, returned after the second hour of school in tears, and told me that they did not feel good. Out of embarrassment, they were forced to remove their yarmulkes. They saw that the students do not pray, recite blessing or cover their heads, etc. Then I realized what I had done -- that I had given my children over to a free-thinking place.

"I could not sleep all night, and I cried together with the children. On Tuesday I took my children and returned them to the religious government school. I then went to the Welfare Office and told Eliyahu Veknin: If the Welfare Office wants my soul and that of my children -- since I am a G-d fearing shochet and a religious Jew with beard and sidelocks -- for 200 Liras a month, I will give up this position." The next day I returned to my low-salaried work.

"Upper Nazareth, 14th of Kislev, 5425,

"The shochet, Yosef Batito"

The mentality of anti-religious coercion had even infiltrated the mind of a kindergarten teacher of the Organization of Working Mothers. According to Shimin Ben Shushan, a low-paid worker, who lives on Taber St. No. 416/6 and is the father of nine children, the above mentioned kindergarten teacher went to his twelve-year-old daughter -- he has his 3-year-old son in her class -- and said that if by the next day they did not bring a note from the Inter-Office Committee that his children had been transferred from the religious school to a secular one, she would no longer accept the little boy in her class.

Even the officials of the Jewish Agency are not missing from this picture. Religious parents complained to the Committee for Religious Education in Upper Nazareth that the officials of the Agency misled them and sent them to register their children in secular schools with the argument that they are religious schools, and they methodically do not direct new religious immigrants to the religious school.

The Great Inequity in Buildings for Religious Education

Another area in this battle of wits against religious education is discrimination in the giving of buildings and services to the religious school. For many years, the school was housed in miserable huts while the other schools had beautiful buildings. The head of the local council did all he could to stop the construction of an appropriate building. To the joy of the religious residents, over a year ago construction was started on a building for the religious school. But in its last stage of construction, Mordechai Alon, head of the local council, placed a "veto" on the building.

This so angered the religious parents that they gathered for a meeting after the Sabbath one particular Saturday night and

decided to suspend studies starting from the following Tuesday and stage demonstrations until the building was given over to them.

Somehow this became known to the police, who always side with the head of the local council. All members of the Parents' Committee were called down. The police captain, Mr. Kaspi, told them they had violated four laws and threatened that if they did not reach an agreement with the head of the city they would be tried.

In a police car they were taken to the office of the head of the local council, and he did not leave the place until the members of the Parents' Committee -- most of whom were new immigrants from Eastern Europe, who by nature fear the sight of a policeman, accepted the conditions of the mayor and agreed to stop the strike.

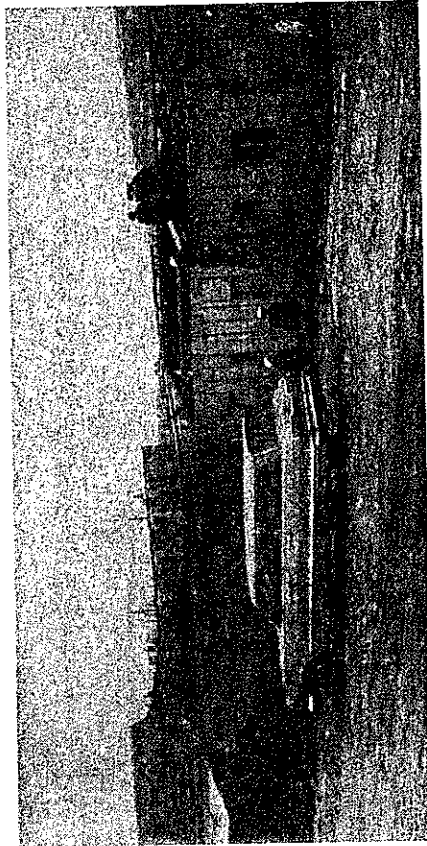
After additional efforts, the head of the council finally agreed to give the building over to the religious school; but it has only eight classes, while the school has thirteen, so again the building is not sufficient.

Details in this matter are found in a letter by the president of the Religious Parents' Committee to the Assistant Secretary of Education, Rabbi Dr. Kalman Kahane:

"Perhaps his honor knows that until now our children learned in huts, in synagogues and in cellars. Now we are about to receive a new building which has been designated for a religious government school. Thank G-d, who has allowed us to live to see this day. But this is the problem. This building has only rooms for eight classes, and we are starting this year with thirteen classes.



Worshippers carrying the holy scrolls away from the site of destruction.



The destruction of the synagogues in Upper Nazareth by the Zionists.

