

Chaim Shapiro

Dr. Leo Deutschlander

זכר צדיק לברכה



Father of the
Bais Yaakov
Movement
*forty years after
his passing*

At a fund-raising dinner in America on behalf of his Yeshiva in Baranovitch, Reb Elchonon Wasserman זצ"ל made a request: the Rabbi of the host synagogue not make the appeal, for he might not encourage too great of a response for a cause other than his own institution. The request was not fulfilled and the Rabbi did make the appeal. "Give a dollar or two — whatever you can," pleaded the Rabbi, and indeed not much more came in.

The Rabbi later apologized to Reb Elchonon for not setting a higher ceiling for contributions. Reb Elchonon replied, "So you are not Bezalel. How can I have misgivings?"

He then explained: when commanded to build the Mishkon (portable sanctuary in the wilderness) Moshe Rabbeinu was told that "Bezalel" would be in charge. Moshe began his search and stopped whomever he met, "Is your name Bezalel?" and the Jew would reply, "No, my name is Chaim" — or, "Sorry, I'm Gamliel."

"Could Moshe have had complaints against them for not being Bezalel?" asked Reb Elchonon. "Of course not! Not everyone has the ability or the z'chus to be a Bezalel. You, sir, are just not a Bezalel."

When Sara Schenirer launched the Bais Yaakov movement, she was totally on her own. At the start there were no fellow Bezalels to assist her. Then they emerged one at a time — first, Reb Gershon Eliezer Friedenson, a most effective molder of opinion, who disseminated the idea on a broad, organized scale. He was joined by an intellectual "Bezalel," Rabbi Shmuel (Leo) Deutschlander who, in many respects, can be considered the father of the movement, for his imprint is felt to this very day — on the schooling of Jewish girls, and on the very richness of the fabric of Jewish life wherever Torah is alive.

Who was Dr. Leo Deutschlander? From where did he draw inspiration to dedicate his life to the spreading of Torah and *Yiddishkeit*?

Boyhood in Berlin

Shmuel's father, Rabbi Nathan Deutschlander, had been the first director of the Religion-School of the Congregation Adas Yisroel in Berlin. When Shmuel was five years old his father died, followed by the passing of his mother two years later. A Mr. Bachman, a teacher in Altona, raised him until he was fifteen when he found a home with his brother-in-law, Rabbi Dr. E. Chaim Biberfeld.

This new home had a lifelong impact on the youngster. Rabbi Biberfeld, formerly rabbi of Karlsruhe, had become a practicing physician in Berlin, when his father, the Rav of the old Bet ha-Midrash, passed away. The congregation had wanted him to accept the vacated position. He yielded on one condition: that he be permitted to continue his medical practice. And so

CHAIM SHAPIRO, a resident of Baltimore, delights JO readers with his articles regarding life in pre-war Europe.

The Jewish Observer/Summer 1975

after a day of visiting his patients in homes and hospitals, he would say the daily *Blatt Gemora* for his congregation. He was a *Gaon* in Torah, and his published *Sefer on Hilchos Shabbos*¹ is still considered a classic. Thus, in the Biberfeld home young Leo was imbued with a love for Torah and *Mesiras Nefesh* (consummate devotion) for *Yiddishkeit*.

When nineteen he began teaching in his late father's school, and young people immediately began clinging to him. During this period, he studied in the Universities of Berlin, Warburg, and Gussen, earning a doctorate in German History and Literature. He became recognized as a genius capable of lecturing on any subject under the sun, yet he would only find satisfaction lecturing on *Tanach*. His combined intellectual achievements and magnetic personality attracted people as moths to a flame, and he used this magnetism to influence *Baalei Teshuva* — estranged Jews in their return to Judaism — a pursuit he followed throughout his life.

Minister in Lithuania

With the outbreak of World War I, Deutschlander was drafted into the Kaiser's army. He became a high ranking German officer and was stationed in occupied Lithuania. During the next four years, while serving as liaison between the German authorities and the Jewish community, he organized the Yavne religious school system for all Lithuania (with the assistance of his friend, Rabbi Carlebach of Altuna). After Lithuania proclaimed its independence he was invited to stay on as head of the school system in the Jewish Ministry of the new-born Republic — a position he retained from 1919 to 1922.

This was but a stepping-stone in his lifetime career in Torah education.

The Keren Hatorah Assignment

Shmuel's youthful years in the Biberfeld home had brought him in contact with many leaders in Orthodoxy, and particularly in Agudath Israel. Notable among them was Dr. Pinchas Cohn, a founder and leader of Agudath Israel, a personal friend of Rabbi Biberfeld. As a result of this influence Shmuel had organized the first Agudah youth group in Germany. Several years after the First World War, he refused a professorship, preferring to organize a religious Seminary for girls in Vienna and to assume an active role in Agudah affairs. When the Knessia Gedola (International Congress of Agudath Israel), in Vienna in 1923, passed a resolution to organize a Keren Hatorah with the purpose of establishing religious schools throughout Europe, the resolution remained on paper, until Dr. Leo Deutschlander was entrusted with the task. He devoted all his energy and time to it.

1. *Sabbath Vorschriften* translated by his son into Hebrew (*Menucha Nechona*). Rabbi Dr. Biberfeld's five sons all followed in his footsteps.

First, he personally raised the necessary funds. Combining Western Europe for contributions was not an easy task, even for a man of his gifts. His friend Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung of New York proved a great help in this endeavor. With these funds he reinforced existing schools and yeshivos, and established new ones. The Novaradok Yeshiva students were crossing the Soviet border into Poland en masse in those days to found new schools in their Bais Yosef network, and he was ready with much-needed financial help.

He dreamed of seeing Torah schools spread throughout Western Europe just as they existed in the East, and he devoted his main efforts to this goal. By dint of personality, dedication, and sincerity, he won the confidence of the Torah leadership of Europe. Thus when he appeared at a Knessia Gedola to report on the activities of Keren Hatorah, he was greeted with a rousing standing ovation. Gedolei Torah would join the entire assemblage in greeting him with "Ye'chi Dr. Deutschlander! (Long live Dr. D.)"

In his work for Keren Hatorah he had heard of Sara Schenirer and her school, and a new era in his life began.

The Bais Yaakov Years

Sara Schenirer was struggling to create a school for girls in Cracow, but it was a difficult undertaking. In addition she was intent on limiting her efforts to the one school. — If the school would grow too large, who would be in control of its policies? When she was joined by Dr. Shmuel Deutschlander, her undertaking did grow in scope, and a local school was transformed into an international institution.

His first step was to allocate subsidies from the Agudath Israel's Keren Hatorah fund. Next, he wrote a pedagogic program befitting a teachers' training school. Then, to implement this program, he embarked on a talent search throughout Europe for a suitable faculty. It was no simple task, for he was looking for academicians dedicated to the ideals of Torah and the Bais Yaakov movement. Moreover, he did not believe in imparting Western culture to the students, but was convinced that all the girls needed could be gained by studying *Sifrei Kodesh* (sacred literature). . . .

Once he found the right person, he had to convince him to join the staff. He personally had abandoned a life of comfort and dignity, when he refused a professorship in a top German university to raise funds for Torah, and to travel in backward communities in Eastern Europe. But how could he expect such dedication from others? Why should they leave the comforts of Western Europe for poverty stricken, backward Poland?

Yet they came and they stayed — not only in the ancient city of Cracow, but even in a primitive location in the Tatra mountains where the Seminary spent summer months.

The Faculty

He dared invite Western academicians to come to teach. . . Rabbi Dr. E. Ehrentrau² of Munich, who neglected his own personal life. . . Miss Rosalie Mannes³ of Zurich. . . Miss Betty Rotschild of Zurich and Miss Judith Rosenbaum of Frankfurt.

Fascinated by the idea of teaching Torah, falling under the spell of Sara Schenirer and of Dr. Deutschlander's personality, captivated by the girls' love for them all, and above all, impressed by the results, they stayed on for many years!

While they all were superb teachers, Yehudis Rosenbaum who stayed on for seven years⁴ gained a special place in the Seminary. Recalls a Cracow graduate: "She was a rare blend — tall, highly educated, and most modern. What does such a person have in common with Bais Yaakov and its ideals? — Very much, for she was a *melumedes* (highly knowledgeable in Torah) and full of *Yiras Shomaim* (fear of Heaven)."

Yehudis eventually became Sara Schenirer's right hand and by the strength of her personality won the hearts of all the girls. The girls so adored her that they would add an additional *Horachamon* in *Birchas Hamozon* (Grace after meals) "for Yehudis Rosenbaum."

These imported teachers — especially the women — represented a cultural phenomenon in Poland: They were educated in German universities and were fully imbued with Torah and *Yiras Shomaim*. It seemed that only Frankfurt succeeded in achieving this unusual sophistication.

The Summer Program

Dr. Deutschlander had claimed that two years was not time enough to make effective teachers out of young girls. And time was short! No less than six hundred letters were piled on Sara Schenirer's desk from communities all over Poland, begging: "Send us teachers! Save our daughters!"

Typical of these teachers was Menucha Pines⁵ of Tiktin. She was accepted in the Seminary when fourteen and graduated at sixteen. At that tender age the graduates would be dispatched to various cities, not only to teach classes, but to organize schools from scratch. They would style their hair to appear older, for they had to deliver speeches to inspire mothers, wake up indifferent fathers, argue with local leaders — sometimes even the *Rav!* — All this after a two year course. . . .

So Dr. Deutschlander introduced summer sessions in a vacation retreat. Taking his cue from the yeshivos located in small towns, away from distractions — the smaller the town the better the yeshiva — he selected a place called Robov in the Tatra mountains. It was not even a village, only a gypsy camp, with the most primitive conditions — huts made from raw planks were

used for eating, sleeping and classrooms. There in the lap of nature, under the motherly supervision of Sara Schenirer, the girls were given a crash teaching course.

Dr. Deutschlander would take off from his busy schedule to lecture in the camp on his favorite subject: *Tehilim* (Psalms). This was a novelty for in Poland, Jews said *Tehilim*, but who ever lectured *Tehilim*?

Menucha Pines recorded: "*The treetops ceased whispering, the birds stopped singing, the whole world stood still while the Herr Doktor lectured Tehilim. We girls were hypnotized, transferred into a different world. When he finished, no one moved. We sat waiting for more — and more.*"

No wonder the girls would say: "He speaks like a *Novi* (a prophet)." According to his close friend Rabbi Binyomin Jacobson,⁶ Dr. Deutschlander's oft-repeated motto was Boaz's advise to Rus: "My daughter, do not go to collect in strange fields." Whatever you will find in other cultures, exists with more beauty and truth in Torah⁷. This was the basis of his educational program. Rabbi Jacobson records Dr. Deutschlander's pride in that no Bais Yaakov Seminary graduate ever went astray.

His Special Concern

Dr. Deutschlander was basically a pedagogue, and as such had a deep interest in every individual student in the Seminary. Having known the pain of growing up as an orphan, Dr Deutschlander had a particular spot in his heart for orphans. Hence when the Seminary built its large handsome building in Cracow, he placed one condition before he delivered the Keren Hatorah's share of the funds: every year a specific number of orphan girls be admitted for half tuition. The benefits reached far and wide — even to the far-off city of Baranovitch, near the Russian border, where Reb Yisroel Yaakov Lubchansky served as *Mashgiach* (dean) in Reb Elchonon Wasserman's Yeshiva. Childless, he raised an orphan girl by the name of Wichna Eisen in his home. When she was ready to attend Seminary, he could not

2. Currently Rav of Klal Adas Yeshurun in London.
3. Miss R. Mannes married Isaac Rosenheim. Presently in Tel Aviv.
4. Until her marriage to Dr. I. Grunfeld of Warzburg, presently Dayan of London, who translated the work of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch for the English speaking public. Dr. Y. Rosenbaum is the great granddaughter of the famous Gaon and Tzadik Seligman Ber Bamberger. זצ"ל
5. Menucha Pines is teaching at the Beth Jacob in Jerusalem for the past thirty five years. She is the wife of Rabbi Zvi Paley of Yeshivas Hebron.
6. In his *אשא דעי למרחוק*
7. Hence Dr. L. Deutschlander's book *Goethe Und Das Alte Testament* [1923], where he points out the heights of the Torah in comparison to World Culture. He also published *A Jewish Reader* [1918] *West-Oestliche Dichterklänge* [1919] *Biblich-Talmudische Sentenzen* [1931], and *History of the Bais Yaakov Schools* [1933], all in German.

afford the hundred zloties monthly tuition. Reb Elchonon wrote his beloved friend Dr. Deutschlander and the girl was immediately accepted. She graduated Sara Schenirer's Seminary, married an American by the name of Rabbi Boruch Kaplan who was learning in a European Yeshiva, and eventually founded America's first Seminary, in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn.

His Tribute to Sara Schenirer

Dr. Deutschlander's personal philosophy is perhaps best expressed in his tribute to Sara Schenirer, which he wrote after her passing: "Bringing *Bnos Yisroel* (Jewish daughter) closer to Hashem was not a duty placed upon her from without. This dominated her entire personality from within, her single drive in life. Her involvement can be compared to the theme of *Moshe Rabeinu's* blessing to the Jewish people upon the completion of the *Mishkan* — a theme Sara Schenirer always took delight in hearing from me. *And Moshe saw that all (was) done, as the Lord has commanded. And Moshe blessed them.* The *Chazal* (Rabbis of blessed memory) add that the blessing was: 'And let the grace of the Lord our G-d be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us, and the work of our hands He will establish.'

"Bezalel and Oholiov were master-builders. It is commonly accepted that every master-builder imprints his individual personality on his work. If the *Mishkan* was built according to Hashem's instructions in every detail, where was there room for personal expression of the Masters? In contradistinction to the wordly outlook, *Yahadus* does not allow one to fully rely on his own thinking and creativity. . . . One can be misled or misguided so easily. While the builders of the *Mishkan* did give expression to their own creativity, they constantly checked to see if it conformed with Hashem's instructions. Thus Moshe's *bracha*: May our personal endeavors always be in perfect harmony with the will of Hashem.

"This was Sara Schenirer's way and the key to her success."

One could say that with these words Dr. Deutschlander wrote his own epitaph, as well.

When the Mission is Accomplished

It seems that from time to time G-d dispatches messengers for specific missions. Once the task is fulfilled, they are recalled without delay. And so Sara Schenirer, the mother of Bais Yaakov, died childless at the age of fifty two. Dr. Yehudis Rosebaum tells of her last moments.⁸ She asked for her *Shabbos* candles, lit them, said the *bracha*, and moments later returned her *neshama* to Heaven, while her candles were still burning, casting their glow. How symbolic — for the work of her hands do illuminate countless Jewish hearts, brightening

countless Jewish homes to this very day.

Five months later, on Tisha B'Av, the Father of Bais Yaakov, Reb Schmuel Deutschlander, was recalled to Heaven, childless, at the age of forty seven, His last words, his legacy: "Take care that whatever was accomplished be perpetuated." Indeed, her candles and his accomplishments continue to shine, lighting the way for Klal Yisroel. □

BEZALEL HEALTH RELATED FACILITY

29-38 Far Rockaway Boulevard
Far Rockaway, N.Y. 11691
Telephone (212) 471-2600

BEZALEL H.R.F.
Is Proud to Announce
That it is Providing

MEDICALLY RELATED HEALTH CARE SERVICES:

- * 24 HOUR NURSING CARE * IN HOUSE MEDICAL STAFF
- * THERAPEUTIC DIETS (GLATT)* SOCIAL WORK SERVICES
- * PHYSICAL THERAPY * RELIGIOUS SERVICES (DAILY)
- * SPEECH THERAPY * BEAUTY SHOP
- * THERAPUECTIC RECREATION * SHABBOS ELEVATOR

*In A Modern Setting Appropriate
For The Religiously Observant*

NEW YORK STATE DEPT. OF HEALTH
N.Y. MEDICAID APPROVED

A Voluntary Non-Profit Health Related Facility

AGUDATH ISRAEL TRAVEL

*Wishes you a Healthy and Peaceful
New Year*

Let us help you start the New Year with an inspiring
and joy-filled trip to Eretz Yisroel.

Ask for Aliza at: (212) 964-2097 / 258-0709

Or write: Agudath Israel Travel / Suite 911
5 Beekman Street / New York, N.Y. 10038

Travel arrangements throughout the world.

- Flights • Hotels • Tours •



TRADITION PERSONNEL — HCUC

"At Your Service With All Your Employment Needs"

Need A Shomer Shabbos Job?

Looking For A Shomer Shabbos Person?

For Fast, Efficient and Courteous Service

18 W. 45th St., New York, N. Y. 10036 • 563-3994

8. In *Jewish Leaders*. by Leo Jung