

REVIEW ESSAY

Abraham J. Bick

Rabbi Bick, one of the remaining students of the late Chief Rabbi A. I. Kook, lives in Jerusalem. He is on the staff of Mossad Harav Kook and has authored many works in Hebrew and Yiddish.

GLOWING EMBERS: MAINTAINING RELIGIOUS JEWISH LIFE IN THE U.S.S.R.

In the early 1930's, the hard "Stalinist line" became the rule in the Soviet regime's handling of religious matters. Hebrew, the language of the Bible and prayer book, was declared to be intrinsically reactionary and was ultimately outlawed. Most of the rabbis still living in the larger and smaller communities were forced to resign. Nevertheless, an adamant and dedicated minority devoted to the perpetuation of Judaism persisted through the 1930's and continued to preserve Jewish religious life.

A townlet in Soviet White Russia in the year 1932 hardly seemed the likely place for the gestation of a book in Jewish theology that would offer a searching vision of Jewish religious disintegration in the historical maelstrom of the Communist revolution. The anguish, courage, tests of faith, and desperate affirmations involved in this combat between the spiritual leaders and Communist dialecticians were recorded in a slim but fascinating Hebrew volume, *Mikhtevei Mehkar u-Bikkoret—Letters of Research and Criticism on the Subject of Judaism and the Rabbinate in Our Times*, by Rabbi Samuel Alexandrov,¹ rabbi of Bobroisk. This collection of his correspondence with rabbinical colleagues under Soviet rule was somehow forwarded as a complete manuscript to a brother in the United States, who had it published in Jerusalem.

Most of Rabbi Alexandrov's letters were addressed to a younger colleague, Rabbi Abraham Joseph Gutman of the eastern Ukraine, who consulted him frequently on issues of conscience. The correspondence was initiated when Rabbi Gutman wrote to his elder colleague that he contemplated resigning his post because he found it impossible, under Soviet conditions, to honestly perform his function as teacher and spiritual guide. Rabbi Alexandrov replied:

So long as a body responds to pain, it is not lifeless. Your very anguish testifies to Judaism's vigor. You asked what to preach in these times. My reply is to

instruct them in the love of Torah and the fear of God. Impose no obligations, make no demands, and do not be severe with those who seem lax in the observance of religious commands. Make certain that you implant the love of Torah and they shall progress, eventually, to the observance of *mitsvot*. . . .²

Rabbi Alexandrov urged Rabbi Gutman to look forward to the time when this era would be over. We have an obligation to survive, he wrote, so that we will be prepared to face the challenges of the future. In fact, in a letter to Rabbi Isaac Krasilchicov of Poltava, Rabbi Alexandrov saw Communism as fitting into a divine plan, allowing one to draw hope even in the current situation.

Judaism and dialectical materialism are incompatible. Nonetheless, I am persuaded that God has temporarily assumed the materialist disguise as a means of working toward a great purpose. . . . The Almighty enfolded Himself into materialism, and light sparkled in the world. It is the divine spark in this process that I discover.³

Atheism, he continued, had come from the One who predicted the events of generations beforehand in order to make it easier for a more perfect and more developed humankind to accept the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. If such people were still firm in their old religion, he wrote, people would enter into a war of ideas. But to come from a monism (the monolithic Marxism-Leninism) to monotheism is not so difficult. One penetrating look at nature and matter is sufficient for men to find in them the all-inclusive deity Who is also present in the observer, he concluded.

Rabbi Krasilchicov himself left a manuscript of theological essays entitled *Hegyonot ve-Ra'yonot*.⁴ In one of the essays, concerning space exploration, he noted the words of such theoreticians of dialectical materialism as Friedrich Engels and Anatoly Lunacharsky, stating:

The advance of science and technology leads man ever onwards to the infinite power which sustains all things. Dialectical materialism believes only in the movement of matter; but matter can only move in space and time, and these are relative. The distinction between material and spiritual is only relative. Matter is turned to energy and energy to matter. The synthesis leads to the source of all being, God, Who is the necessary being.⁵

In another essay, he took issue with Lunacharsky's thesis that the individual craving for eternity will find its normal satisfaction in the blissful dissolution of the ego in the collectivized society.⁶ The rabbi called this a kind of "nirvana in the bosom of the social cosmos, a peculiar brand of Buddhism." It is better to believe, the rabbi concluded, that the thrust of the dialectic will lead men on to the world of the spirit, as in the material world there will be nothing left

for them to accomplish. In this connection, Rambam (Maimonides) says at the end of his *Mishneh Torah* that “when war and hunger will have been banished from the earth, man’s total energies will be directed towards the acquisition of the knowledge of God alone.”⁷

Rabbi Alexandrov was murdered with his Jewish community by the Nazis in 1941. Nothing is known of the fate of Rabbi Gutman, but Rabbi Krasilchicov resigned from the rabbinate in 1929 and settled in Malakhovka, a suburb of Poltava. He was employed as a bookkeeper in a clothing cooperative. An aging man, he retired in the late fifties to write his *magnum opus*, *Tevunah*, a commentary on the Talmud Yerushalmi. It was smuggled out to the United States in the late seventies and ultimately published in Bnei Brak. The work of these rabbis represents the glowing embers of Torah scholars who worked to keep the flame of Torah burning as it confronted the new political reality.

For many of the rabbis, the new reality included forced labor:

Working in the forest, stumbling under heavy loads, frozen by the cold—I was still able to be alone with my Creator and pray to Him. In the labor camp none were permitted prayer shawls or prayer books, and it was difficult to murmur psalms in the muddy hut, constantly subjected to incessant urging, scolding, and the scrutiny of murderous eyes.

These words are from a book of sermonic essays and a diary, written by a learned, pious, eloquent and little-known rabbi, who spent nine years in the icy barbed wire camp of Kolomyah, Siberia. Rabbi Abraham Eliahu Meises of Slutzk, province of Minsk, White Russia, received a nine year sentence for organizing a clandestine yeshivah (talmudical academy). Nevertheless, the rabbi mentions in his diary, he managed to slip a drop of *kedushah* (holiness) into this avalanche of defilement, stench, obscene language, tainted food and evil. “In the forest I was able, thanks to Providence, to worship while sawing and cutting trees and dragging and loading cogs. I was even able on Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) to take hold of branches and erect a *sukkah* in compliance with the law.”

The rabbi, an orphan, appeared from nowhere at the age of fifteen, a budding scholar in the Yeshivah of Slutzk. We know nothing of his early rabbinate, save a single letter of praise, written by his Rabbi, Isser Zalman Meltzer, the head of the Yeshivah of Slutzk. The letter was published when Rabbi Meises came to Israel in the early fifties.

In the pietistic Musar Yeshivah, Rabbi Meises received a lesson in self-concealment; in the labor camp, a lesson in self-scrutiny and self-sacrifice. He went through an emotional catharsis, evident in the introduction to his book, *Yoreh Hakkima* (Jerusalem, 1954). In a

sermon, "The Tower of Babel," the rabbi sees the utopian scheme and the messianic claim of Marxism as a kind of biblical Tower of Babel; when men seek to build their own towers too high into heaven, they are stricken by a confusion of tongues and made conscious of the creaturely limits of their existence. Even in a classless society man will face the eternal problems and factors of jealousy and cowardice, betrayal and failure, joy and melancholy and contempt, illness, old age and death. "No matter how the social tower of Babel should rise, it will not reach infinity."

However, these embers were to be found not only in philosophical works but in the many practical responsa offered to those loyal to Torah. I have collected many of them in *Shomerei ha-Gahelet*⁸ and present here a number of them in appreciation of those who kept the flames burning.

In 1924–1926, two last halakhah volumes were published in the U.S.S.R. The chief rabbi of St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Rabbi David Tebele Katzenelenbogen, published his work *Ma'yan Mei Nefto'ah*,⁹ commentaries and expositions on the tractate *Yevamot*, and the aforementioned rabbi of Poltava, R. Isaac Krasilchicov, published his *Tevunah*, this volume a commentary on the Rambam. Both works are of unique bibliographical value. The second column of the title page of *Ma'yan* has the note (written in Russian): "Published in the printing-house of 'Red agitator.'" *Tevunah* was published "in the Petrovsky printing-house," named after the first Soviet Ukrainian prime minister. Since then Hebrew books have been forbidden. But it is amazing that even until the beginning of the 1970's, there were still Jews in the Soviet Union who asked rabbinical advice about Judaism, and there were rabbis who wrote responsa. Some of these responsa even appeared in print, under the authors' names, in rabbinical periodicals, both in the United States and in Israel, and some remained in manuscript, given to American and Israeli Jewish visitors. The recent phenomenon of *ba'alei teshuvah* in the Soviet Union has given rise to a whole new set of responsa, but they have not yet seen print.

The Soviets began to close synagogues according to a definite pattern. First on the list were the "choir synagogues," which were modern and spacious. Then would come the systematic reduction of the existing smaller houses of prayer, by emphasizing the pressing needs of the community for the buildings. This would be coupled, in case of compliance, with the promise of leaving other synagogues in peace.

In the early thirties some Jewish elders in the town of Snovsk had surrendered a synagogue to the municipal authorities, who had threatened to otherwise forbid all public worship. The rabbi of the

town, R. Shimon Trebnik,¹⁰ wrote to his colleague, the rabbi of Luban, of his doubts about this decision, citing Maimonides.¹¹ “If the enemy besieges a city and demands the surrender of the individual on the threat of decimating all, or the surrender of a certain woman on the threat of violating all women, the individual may not be surrendered.” The *posek* (rabbinical decisor) approved the elders’ action on the grounds that the original precedent did not hold here, as it dealt with a case in which the person or persons being demanded could not be identified by the enemy unless the city or the congregation acted as informer. The synagogue in the present case is known to the authorities, and the surrender of its keys is only a technicality; it can easily be broken into.¹²

In the city of Hadich (province of Kursk), the rabbi, having received permission from the local Soviet Council to establish a *mikveh* (ritualarium) in the *ezrat nashim* (women’s section), asked if the synagogue would be desecrated if converted to such purposes. The rabbi ruled that “it is not considered a violation providing it is released from its sanctity.”¹³

The rabbi of Chernigov (eastern Ukraine) was asked by the elders of nearby Konotop how to go about renting an apartment for their newly elected rabbi, given that all the houses were government property. Was it permitted for the rabbi to reside in the *ezrat nashim*? Rabbi Yehudah Leib Don-Yichyah permitted the conversion of the women’s section, or even the entire synagogue, into an apartment, and suggested the establishment of a *minyán* in a private house.¹⁴

The elders of the synagogue in Zhitomir, Volhynia, asked Rabbi Moshe Tarshansky of the eastern Ukraine if they could sell a *Sefer Torah* and use the money to save their rabbi from imprisonment. The rabbi cited the statement quoted by Isserles:¹⁵ “If the local custom is such that it permits a donor of a *Sefer Torah* to take the *Sefer* back, then if the donor is in financial need, he may take it back to meet his needs.” Clearly, then, the elders who need the rabbi could sell the *Sefer* and thereby they would also be fulfilling the great *mitsvah* of *pidyon shevuyim*, saving prisoners.¹⁶

These responsa give us an insight into the struggle faced by Jews as they fought to maintain forms of their faith and commitment.

The number of Jews in the U.S.S.R who wished to observe Sabbath as a day of rest constantly decreased. Some succeeded in keeping the Sabbath by taking up lines of employment which would make it possible to avoid working on that day, but it was often difficult to get a *minyán* Saturday morning. Thus, the former rabbi of Novosibirsk, Rabbi Isaac Slutsky,¹⁷ who later came to Moscow after his synagogue was closed, was asked by a group of Jews from Malachovka (a Moscow suburb) if it is permitted to call seven men to

the Torah reading in the Sabbath *minhah* service, there being no *minyan* in the morning because worshipers are compelled to go to work. He referred the question to Rabbi Isaac Krasilchicov, who cited Tractate *Megillah*: “Every daily *mitsvah* is legitimate the whole day.” He advised that when ten Jews gather for *minhah* after work, seven should be called to the reading, and afterwards they should recite the *minhah* prayer and call three to a second reading.¹⁸

Jews in Czernovitz, in the western Ukraine, were forbidden by the authorities to celebrate collectively the obligatory third Sabbath meal eaten at dusk. Rabbi Israel Barnbaum, the rabbi of Kishinev, was asked if the Jews should defy the ban. He ruled in the negative. Most commandments are suspended where human life is imperiled. Only if a Jew is ordered to renounce his faith and worship idols must he yield up his life. The Soviet authorities claimed that their target in this case was not the Jewish faith. All public assemblies in the city had been banned for security reasons, and the third meal was classified as a public assembly.¹⁹

Securing unleavened bread for Passover has been a perennial problem from the very beginning of Soviet rule. Rabbi Berish Weidenfeld, the famous Gaon of Chebin, lived in a forest near the city of Sverdlovsk, behind the Ural Mountains, where he worked as a shepherd. He found the time to reply to halakhic questions addressed to him by his colleagues in Siberia. One of these concerned a Jew in Siberia who had only a *ke-zayit* (olive bulk) of *matsah*, the minimum required to fulfill the precept of eating *matsah* on the Seder eve. Should he eat the whole of the available *matsah* himself and fulfill the *mitsvah*, or should he share the amount available with his friends, even though in that case each of them would only fulfill the *mitsvah* partially (*hatsi shiur*)? The rabbi did not rule, but another Lithuanian rabbi, Rabbi Yakov Alter Brisman, who lived in Oranienburg, Ural, ruled that the owner of the *ke-zayit matsah* should “throw a *goral*” (lot) to decide which one of them should eat the *matsah*.²⁰

A group of Telshe Yeshivah scholars, exiled in 1942 to Bizeva, two hundred miles from the Vietka River, worked in a forced labor camp. Assigned to felling trees for a railway clearing, they decided to set up a *sukkah*. The commandant had granted them permission to borrow several planks from a pile in the yard. The planks were too long, so they cut them to size. Halakhah provides that a borrowed object must be returned in its original condition. Their Rosh Yeshivah was asked if the *sukkah* were kosher. The reply in the responsum ruled that it was. The planks were state property; the state is its citizenry; the students are part of the citizenry. The planks, therefore, were their property. The second reason offered was that an object is not deemed borrowed unless it has been removed from the

camp. The planks had thus not been borrowed, and what has not been borrowed cannot be returned.²¹

Loyalty to Halakhic tradition is by and large a personal matter. Nevertheless, it often depends on others. Some young Soviet Jews were prepared to submit to religious marriage either out of conviction or to please their parents. But they faced expulsion from the party and economic downgrading if discovered, and therefore did not risk a *minyán* at the ceremony. In effect, those who rigidly insisted on the provision of a quorum served to discourage religious marriages. The Soviet rabbinical opinion in this case was split. Rabbi Chaim Shraga Kulish, former rabbi of Kharkov, was lenient; other rabbis insisted on the full quorum.²²

Responsa embrace a wide range of social law. The first question concerning any responsa is whether they are compatible with the civil law. The principle on this point—and it has never been controverted—was already formulated in the third century by the Talmud: *dina de-malkhuta dina*, “the law of the kingdom is binding law,” excepting those laws which would compel Jews to disavow their faith. Jewish tradition has always been more concerned with man’s dignity than with the state of his property, and some of the Soviet rabbis have been sympathetic to the professed egalitarian purposes of Marxism.²³ But their one abiding concern, from which nothing could deflect them, has been religious freedom, the right of men to live in accordance with the beliefs and ethical dictates of their religion.

In the early 1920’s, when the Soviet secret police started the horror-trials and convicted the accused by their own confessions, the former Commissar of Justice, I. N. Steinberg, a religious Jew, asked Rabbi Aba David Goldfein, rabbi of Moscow, if self-incriminatory confessions are valid according to Halakhah. The rabbi referred to Maimonides (*Sanhedrin* 18:6): “A court cannot execute or flog a man on his own confession,” and according to the commentary of Ridbaz, even the guilty are protected, because man cannot indulge in self-destruction, since he is not the master of his own life.²⁴

Some responsa reveal the character of a religious underground in the Soviet Union. Observant Jews in Leningrad assembled secretly in a room. Amongst them was an informer. They therefore decided to hide in the cellar of the building, but as only ten of them could hide, they decided to cast lots among themselves to determine who would be the ten. The question was: is it permissible to be saved through a lottery? According to *Sefer Hasidim* (*Book of the Pious*, by R. Yehudah he-Hasid of the 13th century), it is forbidden to decide by a lot as did the sailors in the book of Jonah. However in this

situation a rabbi permitted it, since it was considered a matter of life or death. "Those who can should be saved."²⁵

Particular responsa indicate that some of the rabbis were involved in very heroic enterprises. One responsum deals with "a person who helped *talmidei hakhamim* (scholars) across the border." The Soviet secret police got on the smuggler's trail and he fled for his life. A Jewish informer pursued him across the border, apparently into one of the "people's democracies." The manner of which the smuggler's encounter with the Soviet Jewish informer was resolved is obliquely stated, based on a ruling in the classic commentary *Or Same'ah*, by Rabbi Meir Simha of Dvinsk. "The issue was life and death. It was self-defense."²⁶

May a Jew swear an oath of loyalty to the Socialist constitution? Such an oath has no substance and Jewish citizens are not obliged to suffer punishment by omitting the oath. Furthermore, when the Gaon Rabbi Aaron Kotler of Kletzk was called to Soviet authorities in Yanova, a townlet in Soviet Lithuania, and asked if he would vote in the elections for representatives to the Supreme Soviet, he responded that he would vote "as the government will advise."²⁷

A curious responsum deals with Karl Marx, the founder of Communism. In his work, *Das Kapital*, Marx quotes the Biblical law, "Do not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." Does this apply also to the food worker or baker, i.e., may they eat the product? The rabbi replies, "I never read Marx. It is not my *esek* (concern); but according to Talmud it certainly applies to the factory worker."²⁸

A further curious question: Is it permitted to set the time according to the "Spasky-clock" in the Kremlin ("Church of the Savior") in Moscow, since it is forbidden to derive pleasure from idolatry? The rabbi permitted it for two reasons: The Kremlin Tower is now a museum of architectural objects and has no cross, and the clock itself was never an object of worship and is not in the category of idolatry.²⁹

It is fitting, I think, to end this brief review with a question about the sanctification of God's name, for it reveals the working of popular antisemitism in the Soviet Union. A Jew from Vilna emigrated to Gorky (formerly Nizhni-Novograd) and obtained employment there by passing as a Lithuanian. Has this Jew renounced his faith? Renunciation would be unforgivable even if life itself were imperiled. The rabbi quotes Rabbi Israel Isserlein in his *Terumat ha-Deshen*, who had been asked whether Jews might pass as non-Jews in countries where they were forbidden to enter. The rabbi rules that the Lithuanian Jew had not been guilty of renouncing his faith. Asked where he had come from, he replied "Lithuania," a true statement; asked his nationality he also replied "Lithuanian."

Nationality is an ambiguous term—it has one meaning in some countries, another in others. Under Soviet law nationality means descent, and the Jew has obviously denied his descent, but only under the law. Soviet questions do not inquire about religion. On this score, the responsum acquits the Vilna Jew of renouncing his faith.³⁰ Indeed, all of these responsa testify to the Jews' loyalty to their faith and tradition.

NOTES

1. Prolific author of religious-scientific works: *Tal Tehiyya, Agadat Pah ha-Shemen* and others. See *Encyclopedia of Religious Zionists*, Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1957, vol. 1.
2. *Mikhtevei Mehkar u-Bikkoret*, Jerusalem 1932, p. 14.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
4. See essay published in *Shomerei ha-Gahelet*, Jerusalem 1966, p. 31.
5. *Ibid.*
6. A. Lunacharsky, *Socialism and Art*, Kharkov 1925, p. 29.
7. *Hilkhhot Melakhim* 12:5.
8. See n. 4.
9. St. Petersburg, 1924.
10. 1884–1963. Rabbi of Snovsk and Haditch, and in 1956 Rosh Yeshivah at “Kol Yakov,” Moscow.
11. Hebrew monthly *Ha-Mesillah*, editor Rabbi Nissan Telushkin, New York, N.Y. 1937, 1. Rambam, *Yesodei ha-Torah* 1:7.
12. *Ha-Mesillah*, *ibid.*
13. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Iggerot Moshe*, vol. 4, New York 1965, *Orah Hayyim* 12.
14. Rabbi Yehudah Leib Don-Yichyah, *Bikkurei Yehudah*, vol. 2, Tel-Aviv 1939, *Yoreh De'ah* 2.
15. Rabbi Moshe Tarshansky, *Zikhron Moshe*, Jerusalem 1972, *Yoreh De'ah* 7, quoting Isserles, *ibid.*
16. Quoted in the annual *Shanah be-Shanah*, vol. 13, Jerusalem 1973.
17. 1889–1970. Pupil of the Hafets Hayyim in Radin Yeshivah; rabbi in Berezina, Minsk Province, before exile to Siberia.
18. *Shomerei ha-Gahelet*, 12.
19. *Ibid.*, 19.
20. Rabbi Berish Weidenfeld (1879–1966), *Dovev Meisharim*, Jerusalem 1951, vol. 2, 11; Rabbi A. Y. Brizman, *Zeh ha-Yam*, Tel Aviv 1952, 7.
21. *Shomerei ha-Gahelet*, 28.
22. See periodical *Sha'arei Tsiyyon*, Jerusalem 1929, vol. 13.
23. See, for example, *Mikhtevei Mehkar u-Bikkoret*.
24. Rabbi Abraham Chen, *Be-Malkhut ha-Yahadut*, Mosad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 1970, vol. 1.
25. Rabbi Avraham David Hurwitz, Beit-Din Haredi, Jerusalem, *Kinyan Torah*, Jerusalem 1984, vol. 4, 22.
26. *Shomerei ha-Gahelet*, 29.
27. *Ibid.*, 31; Rabbi Alter Pekier, *From Kletzk to Siberia*, Brooklyn 1985, p. 49.
28. *Shomerei ha-Gahelet*, 32.
29. *Ibid.*, 15.
30. *Ibid.*, 16.

BIOGRAPHICAL VIGNETTES

RABBI EZEKIEL ABRAMSKY (Lithuania 1887 – Jerusalem 1971)

Talmudic scholar and author. Studied in the Yeshivot of Telz and Mir. Rabbi in Slutzk (Minsk and Smolensk Provinces). Editor of rabbinic periodical *Yagdil Torah*, published in Slutzk by permission of Soviet Government (Bobroisk 1928, printing press “Komintest”). Arrested in 1930 and sent to hard labor in Siberia. Released after a year and appointed rabbi of the London Orthodox community “Mahzikei ha-Dat.” Author of commentary on Tosefta, *Hazon Yehezkel*, in ten volumes. Settled in Israel in 1959.

RABBI SAMUEL ALEXANDROV (Borisov, Province of Minsk 1866 – Bobroisk 1942)

A child prodigy. Learned in the Yeshivah of Volozhin, acquired general knowledge, and became attached to the Haskalah (Enlightenment). Contributed many philosophical and theological articles in Russian-Hebrew newspapers and periodicals. Lived in Bobroisk, vicinity of Minsk, as a private citizen, by profession a treasurer in a bank. After the October revolution he served as the rabbi of the town. Among his works: *Tal Tehiyyah*, *Agadat Pah ha-Shemen*, and three volumes of *Mikhtevei Mehkar u-Bikkoret (Letters of Research and Criticism)*. Exchanged letters with the rabbis of Pawelgorod and Poltawa about the future of Judaism in the Soviet Union.

RABBI RAPHAEL MORDECAI BARISHANSKY (Lithuania 1860 – New York 1949)

Studied in Volozhin Yeshivah, ordained by the famous Rabbi Samuel Mohliver, a founder of religious Zionism. In 1898 appointed rabbi in Gomel, White Russia. After the Bolshevik Revolution he defied the Yevseksia (Jewish section of the Russian Communist Party) for its closing *Hadarim* (Hebrew religious elementary schools), and was imprisoned for several months for disseminating counterrevolutionary propaganda. In 1925 he immigrated to the United States, the first rabbi to leave Russia after the revolution. He described his days in prison in a series of memoirs.

RABBI MORDECAI DOV EIDELBERG (Byalistok 1881 – Holocaust 1942)

Prolific author and preacher. Studied in the Volozhin Yeshivah. Was the rabbi of Kantakuzova and Cherson, Ukraine, until eight years after the October Revolution, and one of the first fighters against the “Godless.” Imprisoned for a month and left U.S.S.R. in 1925. Until Holocaust the rabbi of Makova and Plock, Poland. Works include *Hazon la-Mo'ed (Vision of the Times)*, responsa and sermons.

RABBI MORDECAI FEINSTEIN (Shklov, Mogilev Province 1888 – Siberia ?)

Of the last Talmudic scholars in Russia; until 1932, rabbi in Shklov and Rosh Yeshivah of its Talmudical Academy. Exiled to Siberia.

RABBI SAMUEL JACOB GLICKSBERG (Mezeritch, Poland 1882 – Tel Aviv 1959)

Scholar and preacher. Studied in Minsk, rabbi of Swislocz, Minsk Province, and Chief Rabbi of Odessa. Author of *Ha-Derashah be-Yisrael*, a history of Jewish preaching. Became prominent in the twenties in his debates with the leaders of the “Godless.” In one of his debates with Anatoli Lunacharsky, Commissar of Culture and Education, the Marxist theoretician proclaimed, “My faith in collective redemption gives me such power in the future as cannot be given by any religion.” Rabbi Glicksberg replied, “The faith you have is precisely of the religious kind.”

Rabbi Glicksberg immigrated to Erets Yisrael in 1935 and became the rabbi of the Nordau quarter in Tel Aviv.

RABBI ABRAHAM GUTMAN (Krislavka, Vitebsk Province 1879 – Charkov, Ukraine 1940)

Studied at the famous yeshivah of Telshe. Before the revolution, rabbi in Grischina (Krasno Armeisk), and afterwards rabbi of Pawelgrad, Poltawa Province. In 1913 he published a work of sermonic essays, *Yisrael ba-Adam (Israel in Humanity)*, where he dealt with philosophical and social problems. After the revolution he exchanged letters with his friend Rabbi Alexandrov of Bobroisk, consulting with him on theological questions and literary projects.

