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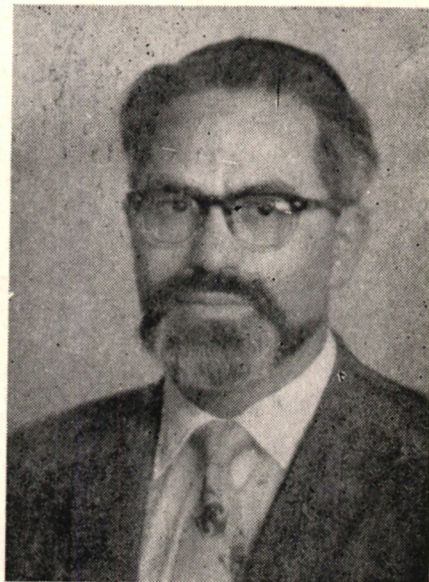
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Rabbi Gotthold is a native of Germany and has studied at Yeshivoth in Poland and United States of America. He was ordained at the Rabbi Issac Elhanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, New York. He is a graduate of New School for Social Research, New York. He has served as a Rabbi for many years in U.S.A. and Canada.

The distinguished Rabbi has taught Rabbinics Talmud and other subjects at various Yeshivoth in U.S.A. and Israel. He has contributed to scholarly papers in the fields of Talmud, History, Music and Sociology. He is a regular contributor to the monthly journal published by the Chief Chaplain of the Israeli Armed Forces, Tradition, etc. Among others, he has translated into English "Meditations on the Torah" which is a Religious best seller in America. He is also a lecturer on Religion at the Afro-Asian Institute for labour studies and co-operation.

The Rabbi has come to India (on 27th May 1963) at the invitation of the Orthodox
(Contd. on page 15)



Rabbi Zev Gotthold

*Director, Department for Contact
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TO BE A JEW

I

It was never easy to be a Jew. But it was never as hard as it is to day. I do not refer to the restrictions and prohibitions that limit the activities of the observant Jew. For the Jew who believes, these practical regulations are a joy, an expression of love. Nor do I mean the exposed political position of the Jew in modern society, a role that has, to some extent, become even more difficult for him in the Diaspora because of the State of Israel. For the Jew who chooses to identify himself with his people, these obstacles are all part of the unfolding of the great and long-awaited drama of redemption.

I mean, rather, that it is hard to *feel* like a Jew, to experience the depth of Jewish religious emotion that scans the spectrum from fear and awe to love and joy. It becomes more and more difficult seriously to engage G-d in a dialogue which will lift us above the commonplace and the pedestrian to a new level of vision and purity. Our hearts have run dry. The spirit is parched. The soul is overlaid with the dreaded dust of despair.

Our society and culture are composed of many elements, and all of them conspire against us. Protestantism tells us to look into ourselves first for the source of religion. And so we look and we find nothing. The psychologists tell us to consider only the *experience* of religion, rather than its practice or creed. But we experience nothing. Scientists present us with a cold, depersonalized world, in which man's eyes turn heavenward only to follow the orbit of the newest satellite. And so it is not worth looking at all. G-d seems to have vanished from His world, to have packed a suitcase filled with all the pleasures and agonies, the awe and the ecstasy, formerly

reserved for Him by His people, and to have left without so much as saying "Goodbye."

What, then, are we to say to the Jew, estranged from the sources of the Jewish tradition, who feels himself awkward in the milieu of maximal Jewishness but yet pines for some sensation of piety, for at least a trace of the fervor that informed the lives of his ancestors—and even some of his devout contemporaries?

We have heard time and again the heart-rending complaint of so many of the non-religious: "I would like to believe—but I can't." These words are sincere, and they are not the result of laziness or the cult of convenience. For the modern Jew is caught in a seemingly inescapable dilemma: he cannot practice Judaism, for he does not feel it within; and he cannot feel it within for he does not practice it.

Here indeed, in this formulation of the question, is the beginning of the answer. The logical order directs us first to experience religion subjectively and only then to practice its objective precepts. It is this "logical" order which has kept man outside the realm of a living faith, suspended in a limbo of meaninglessness. But the *natural* order proceeds in the opposite direction: first practice, then experience; first live, then feel; first *naaseh*, then *nishma*. Just as in natural language learning, the actual act of idiomatic conversation precedes grammatical analysis, so religion requires an "idiomatic" participation before analysis is attempted. "*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*" (Ps 34 : 9)

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