In This Issue

Divrei Torah from
Rabbi Reuven Brand
Rabbi Kenneth Brander
Rabbi Shmuel Marcus
Rabbi Dr. Dovid Horwitz

RIETS Dinner Highlights

Musmakhim in the Limelight: Community Kollelim
In This Issue

Page 3 News from RIETS
A report on the successful RIETS dinner in honor of Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, and an overview of new activity in the CJF-RIETS community kollelim.

Page 10 Musmakhim in the Limelight
An interview with three RIETS musmakhim who have formed their career through the experiences they had as fellows of community kollelim, plus a brief history of the American community kollel by Rabbi Dr. Adam Ferziger.

Page 15 Practical Halacha
Bein Yisrael La’amim: Reflections before and after an encounter at the Vatican.

Page 6 Chomer L’Drush
Aharon’s Chanukah:
Ahavas Yisrael and Ahavas Hashem
Rabbi Reuven Brand

Page 10 Back to the Beit Midrash
Time to Light
Rabbi Shmuel Marcus

Page 7 Divrei Chizuk
The Fires of Chanukah and Havdalah
Rabbi Kenneth Brander

Page 17 RIETS-CJF Kollel Initiative Participants

Page 18 Lifecycles

Editor’s Correction
In the September ’08 edition, we offered our condolences to Rabbi Aaron Chomsky. Unfortunately we misidentified his loved one who passed away. It was his wife, Rebbitzen Lillian z’l, not his mother. We sincerely regret the error.
RIETS Dinner an Inspiring Success

Rabbi Zevulun Charlop ’54R, dean emeritus of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and special advisor to the president on yeshiva affairs, was honored for his extraordinary achievement in Torah learning and leadership over 35 years as the seminary’s dean at the RIETS Annual Dinner of Tribute on September 17. Over 650 people attended at the event at the Grand Hyatt in New York City.

Herbert Smilowitz and his son, Rabbi Mark Smilowitz ’95R, were the inaugural America/Israel Dor L’Dor Award recipients. RIETS also recognized members of its 10th, 25th and 50th anniversary classes (1998, 1983, and 1958). More than $1 million was raised for the seminary. The evening was marked by warm tributes and a celebration of RIETS. In recognizing Rabbi Charlop, Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel said, “You have raised all of us to be your wonderful family; and you’ve done it just by being Rabbi Zevulun Charlop.”

“He has set the pattern for the needs, and for filling the needs, of the modern rabbi in the modern community,” said Rabbi Julius Berman, chairman of the RIETS Board of Trustees.

“Rabbi Charlop has left us with a legacy of excellence, a legacy of integrity, a legacy of erudition, a legacy of honor and a legacy of kindness, compassion and sensitivity towards all students,” said Rabbi Yona Reiss ’91R, who succeeded Rabbi Charlop this year as The Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS.

“I wouldn’t be who I am without the support of Rabbi Charlop,” said Rabbi Reuven Brand ’05R, a RIETS alumnus who came to the dinner from Illinois, where he is the director of Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Chicago Kollel in Skokie. “There’s a magic in RIETS, and a magic in what we have in this room. Thank you, Rabbi Charlop, for helping us to share this magic with others.”

President Joel announced that a wing of the Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Center for Jewish Study—now under construction on YU’s Wilf Campus in Washington Heights—would be named for Rabbi Charlop, thanks to gifts from a group of YU supporters. He also presented Rabbi Charlop with the first edition of Sefer Zeved Tov, a volume published for the occasion, which is a compilation of halachic, philosophic and Torah articles written by gedolei Yisrael. Rabbi Ari Zaltz ’04R, a member of the Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon and assistant to the rabbi at Congregation Bnei Yeshurun in Teaneck, NJ edited the volume.

A 1951 Yeshiva College graduate, Rabbi Charlop received his semikhah from RIETS in 1954. He

RIETS-CJF Augment Kollel Initiatives

The Center for the Jewish Future – RIETS is proud to announce the opening of several new transformational community initiatives. These new initiatives, currently located in Chicago, South Florida, and San Francisco, serve to position Yeshiva University-RIETS as a “Yeshiva without walls,” primed to spread the values of Torah Umadda to the broader community. Each in their unique way, these initiatives look to enrich and engage the greater Jewish community with inspired Torah living and learning, celebrating the core values of the primacy of Torah, embracing the larger world through the prism of Jewish ideals and the religious significance of the State of Israel. Moreover, these initiatives create a laboratory for cultivating RIETS musmakhim as future communal leaders.

Rabbi Aaron Leibowitz is charged with coordinating all of the activities of these new initiatives. According to Rabbi Kenneth Brander ’86R, dean of Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future: “As start-ups they have unbelievable potential but must be nurtured if they are to serve as effective satellites of Yeshiva University in various regions of the country. Rabbi Leibowitz and Phil Moskowitz are charged with this responsibility and are doing an exceptional job at enabling these kollelim to blossom.”

Chicago

As an outgrowth of the highly successful Chicago summer kollel, RIETS-CJF and local community

continued on page 4
RIETS Dinner an Inspiring Success

continued from page 3

was appointed The Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS in 1971 and served in that position until this past July. Rabbi Charlop has also served as the spiritual leader of the Young Israel of Moshulu Parkway in his native Bronx for the past 54 years.

Rabbi Charlop comes from a long line of rabbinic leadership and Jewish scholarship. His father, Rabbi Jechiel Michael Charlop, was ordained at RIETS in 1921 and served as the spiritual leader of the Bronx Jewish Center for 46 years. His grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop, was an associate of Chief Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and rosh yeshiva of Merkaz HaRav in Jerusalem from its inception.

Visibly moved by the many tributes he received, Rabbi Charlop thanked all the speakers, and added of the evening’s other honorees, “I’m extremely happy that I can share this evening with my very good friends, Herbert and Mark Smilowitz.”

The Smilowitz family has a deep and long-standing connection to RIETS. “Blessed is the father who has such a son, and blessed is the son who has such a father,” said Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm ’51R, Rosh HaYeshiva and chancellor of Yeshiva University. Dr. Lamm hailed Herbert Smilowitz as “a quiet giant,” and noted that Mark Smilowitz is “a superb politician—not in the vulgar sense of the word, but in the Aristotelian sense: he has an intuitive knowledge of human relationships.”

Herbert Smilowitz, honored at the dinner as “a humble man of faith,” joined the RIETS Board of Trustees in 1994 and now serves as its vice chairman. He received the RIETS Eitz Chaim award in 2002. Mr. Smilowitz and his wife, Marilyn, are benefactors of YU and reside in West Orange, NJ.

Rabbi Mark Smilowitz, who was cited for his rabbinic leadership and educational commitment, graduated from Yeshiva College in 1992 and earned his master’s degree from YU’s Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. Rabbi Smilowitz resides in Beit Shemesh, Israel with his wife, Michelle, and four children.

The America/Israel Dor L’Dor Award recognizes parents and children who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of higher Jewish education in the Torah Umadda model and who have made a meaningful impact in communities in both the United States and Israel. ■

RIETS-CJF Augment Kollel Initiatives

continued from page 3

leaders partnered to open a new year-round kollel this year in the Windy City. The Yeshiva University – Torah Mitzion Chicago Community Kollel is headed by Rosh Kollel Rabbi Reuven Brand ’05R, a past member of the Bella and Harry Waxner Kollel Elyon and former assistant rabbi at Congregation Shomrei Torah in Fair Lawn, NJ.

The Chicago kollel will enhance the already strong Jewish community while raising the level of Jewish commitment throughout the greater Chicago area. Like all community initiatives, this kollel will give its members an opportunity to develop their teaching, learning and leadership skills.

Rabbi Brand is joined in Chicago by eight other American and Israeli families and an administrative staff. With the goal of both enriching and engaging the Chicago community, Rabbi Brand hopes to create an institution “of outstanding Jewish learning which will be warm, inspiring and welcoming — a beacon of light of which our community can be proud.” Oren Skidelsky, president of the board of YU Torah Mitzion Kollel, commented: “I am excited to partner with Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future to create a kollel which promotes the values of Torah Umadda and religious Zionism and shares these values with the broader Chicago community. Our children need to grow up hearing that Torah is more than a text, it is a way of life.”

South Florida

The Center for Jewish Leadership and Learning (CJLL) in South Florida has brought together a diverse team of community scholars who will deliver shuirim and coordinate programs for the greater South Florida Jewish community. Targeting communities from Miami to North Palm Beach, the CJLL looks forward to partnering with local synagogues, federations, schools and rabbis to increase the level of Torah study and a commitment to the values of Torah Umadda L’chatila. CJLL is led by Executive Director Rabbi David Guterman. Rabbi Guterman served as the rabbinic scholar for the Philadelphia Jewish Federation and directed the Hillel at Rutgers University. The community scholars include Rabbi Avi Billett ’05R, Rabbi Josh Flug ’01R, and Rabbi Yaakov Gibber ’03R, who also serves as the rabbi of Ohev Shalom in Boca Raton. The CJLL reaches out across the spectrum to share the values of Modern Orthodoxy, serve as a resource to rabbis from all denominations and aid the RIETS rabbis in South Florida: Rabbi Efrem Goldberg ’01R of the Boca Raton Synagogue, Rabbi Moshe Rothschild ’02R of Beit David Highland Lakes Shul in Aventura, Rabbis Edward Davis ’70R and Yosef Weinstock ’05R of the Young
San Francisco Bay Area

In collaboration with the Jewish Study Network (JSN), Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future-RIETS has formed a premier outreach kollel dedicated to supporting our local RIETS musmakhim and increasing Jewish literacy in the San Francisco Bay Area. Although JSN has had a presence in the Bay Area for several years, this new collaboration allows JSN to form a partnership with Yeshiva University and our kollel members focusing on San Francisco and Oakland. New kollel members are Rabbi Shaye Guttenberg ’08R, who now serves as the director of the JSN San Francisco Kollel and Rabbi Josh Marder, who in addition to his kollel responsibilities will be furthering his professional development by pursuing a master’s degree in drama therapy. The JSN San Francisco Kollel will work closely with Rabbi Joshua Strulowitz ’05R, rabbi of Congregation Adath Israel of San Francisco, himself a graduate of TORCH, a community kollel in Houston, TX and Rabbi Judah Dardik ’01R, rabbi of Congregation Beth Jacob, Oakland. Rabbi Judah Dardik is joined by a new assistant rabbi and recent RIETS graduate Rabbi Michael Davies ’08R. Oakland has been the primary address for RIETS talent over the years, where Rabbi Howard Zack ’85R, helped build a Torah infrastructure in the Bay Area during his 16-year tenure there (Rabbi Zack currently serves as the rabbi of Torat Emet in Columbus, OH). Rebbetzin Bethany Strulowitz and Rabbi Michael and Ora Davies teach at the Oakland Hebrew Day School, which was founded during Rabbi Zack’s tenure.

‘As a graduate of Yeshiva College, Azrieli and RIETS and a member of the Yeshiva University family on the one hand, and as the new director of the JSN in San Francisco (and now a member of the JSN family), I feel that I am part of the shiduch that links the two organizations,” declared Rabbi Guttenberg. “The JSN-YU relationship is synergistic and dynamic with similar visions and goals. Both organizations believe, as a fundamental principle, that the Jewish observant community must not remain insular but must extend its influence to the broader Jewish community. Together with our creative cohort of Rabbis Avi Billet, Yaakov Gibber and Josh Flug, we, the ‘rabbis-without-borders’ will work mightily to make this vision a reality.’

Israel of Hollywood, and the aforementioned Rabbi Gibber. The fellows will also work with the local day schools: the Hebrew Academy Brauser Maimonides, Solomon Schechter, Donna Klein Day School, Weinbaum Yeshiva High School and Hillel of Boca Raton, to name a few.

“We are thrilled that Yeshiva University Center for Jewish Leadership and Learning is partnering with the Federation in our shared aspiration to nurture a more literate and Jewishly engaged community,” noted Bill Bernstein, president and CEO of the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County. “In the short amount of time that Rabbi David Gutterman has been leading the CJLL initiative, we have greatly enjoyed his dynamic teachings and genuinely warm and welcoming personality. We look forward to working together with him and his team to benefit our community.”

Rabbi David Gutterman, executive director, added: ‘Some men see things as they are and ask why— others dream things that never were and say … YU! The Center for Jewish Leadership and Learning is an initiative that is groundbreaking in its conception and breathtaking in its intention. As a community partner of Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future, the CJLL has as its most noble aspiration the desire to become a community of Jews who have not had the opportunity to study Jewish text. The Fellows that we’ve seen at the YU Kollel at Ramaz have been remarkable young men. The thing that impressed me the most is at the very end of the first year [of the Kollel], when we had a closing assembly, the entire student body stood up and gave them [the kollel fellows] a standing ovation. ‘

Rabbi Shaye Guttenberg reaching out to Bay Area Jews.

Rabbi Jay Goldmintz
Headmaster,
Ramaz Upper School, New York City

“Our ongoing partnership with YU-CJF has been a critical factor in building a vibrant Modern Orthodox community in Dallas. In particular, our YU community kollel has had a transformative impact on our community by attracting young, ambitious and talented Jewish educators who have helped energize our day schools and revitalize our shul while serving as models of Torah Umadda L’chatchila.”

Rabbi Ari Perl
Congregation Shaarei Tefilla, Dallas, TX

“It has been a distinct pleasure to work with the staff of the CJF in developing effective strategies for building a brighter Jewish future for the Bay Area Jewish community.”

Rabbi Joey Felsen
Executive Director and Founder,
Jewish Study Network, San Francisco, CA

“...a standing ovation.”
Aharon’s Chanukah: Ahavas Yisrael and Ahavas Hashem
Rabbi Reuven Brand
Rosh Kollel, Yeshiva University-Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago

At the start of Parshas Beha’aloscha (Bamidbar 8:2) Rashi questions the juxtaposition of hadlakas hamenorah, the beginning of Beha’aloscha and the preceding passage which deals with the korbanos of the Nesim at the time of Chanukas HaMishkan. Rashi cites a Midrash that describes how Aharon felt neglected, as his tribe, Levi, did not participate in the korbanos Hanesim. To assuage this hurt, Hashem promised Aharon that his descendants would be the ones to light the menorah of the Beis Hamikdash. The Ramban notes that his descendents would be the ones to light the menorah of the Bais Hamikdash, but rather, to the lighting of the menorah of Chanukah for generations to come.

This entire description is perplexing. First, why was Aharon perturbed by his exclusion from the korbanos Hanesim? Shouldn’t he have been satisfied by all of the korbanos that he offers? The Nesim have one korban and the Kohanim have all of the rest! Moreover, Hashem’s response remains a mystery. What consolation is it to Aharon that his descendents would light the menorah, as he is still missing out on the korban of the miliyon?

To better understand this portion, let us examine the nature of the korbanos Hanesim and the lighting of the Menorah. We will suggest two approaches that can shed light on this issue, the first one follows the path of bein adam lachaveiro and the second follows a model of bein adam lamakom.

Each of the 12 Nesim offered a korban on the first 12 days after the dedication of the Mishkan which included animal korbanos, a mincha, a ketores and donations of klei shares. This offering was unusual in two respects. This event is the only time that an individual, a yachad, offered a ketores, as the standard ketores is a korban tzibbur. In contrast to the ketores of Nadav and Avihu, which was rejected by Hashem, the ketores of the Nesim was instructed and welcomed by Hashem. In addition, these korbanos were brought on 12 successive days, including Shabbos. The Mishnah in Temurah (2:1) teaches that only korbanos tzibbur have the capacity to override Shabbos, yet these korbanos were for korbanos yachad — voluntar offerings by the individual Nesim?

The Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Naso, Remez 717) teaches:

Rabbi Yishmael says: What does it mean “from the princes of Israel?” To teach that they volunteered on their own all equal amounts and not one of them offered more than his friend for had it been that one of them offered more than his friend, not one of them would have overridden Shabbos. Hashem said to them: you gave honor, each one to his friend and I will give you honor.

Since all of the Nesim offered identical korbanos and no individual attempted to surpass his colleague, Hashem honored them by allowing the korbanos to be offered on Shabbos. This Midrash fits with the Gemara’s statement (Yoma 51a) that when a korban is brought as a group (vishnuufa) it is treated as a korban tzibbur and is doche Shabbos. Essentially, the unity of the Nesim elevated each of their individual korbanos to a status of korban tzibbur, which allowed the ketores and the korban to be brought on Shabbos.

In light of this insight, perhaps we can understand why Aharon felt a particular desire to participate in the korbanos Hanesim. Avos Drabbi Nissan (12:3) teaches that Aharon was the paragon of unity among the Jewish people, the quintessential ohev shalom v’redef shalom. Aharon saw this unique demonstration of unity among the Nesim and wanted to participate. In addition, the role of the ketores of the Nesim is especially fitting for Aharon, as the ketores itself represents unity. The Gemara (Kerisa 6b) states:

Rabbi Channa Bar Bizna said that Rav Shimon Chasida said: Any fast that does not contain the sinners of Israel is not a fast day, for the ‘chelebnah’ has a foul odor, yet the Torah lists it among the spices of the ketores.

Aharon sought to partake in this symbol of unity, which he is actually given later in Sefer Bamidbar as an antidote to strife and plague.

It is in this context that Hashem replies with the consolation of the lighting of the Menorah. On a basic halachic level, the Gemara teaches (Pesachim 59a) that there is a hekesh between the ketores and the neiros of the menorah. However, the similarity exists on a philosophical level as well. The Sforno (Bamidbar 8:2) describes beautifully how the Menorah represents the unity of the Jewish people. He details how the lights on either side of the central branch of the menorah face the middle light. Each side represents a different segment of the community: the lights on the right side personify those who are constantly involved in Torah study, and the lights on the left side represent those who are involved in building the world. Both groups of lights face the middle light — the light of Hashem — unified by this common goal, and as the Sforno writes, “between all of them His purpose is fulfilled.” Hence, the Menorah represents the same message of unity that the korbanos of the Nesim communicated. The menorah of Chanukah spreads this light even further. We know that the elementary mitzvah of Chanukah lighting is “ner ish uveisa” — one candle for a man and his household. This mitzvah is one that relates to the household, not just individual people, but to the entire unified family. It is this light of unity in our homes that we radiate out into the streets and alleys, from our doorways to the entire community. Perhaps this is why the Magen Avraham (introduction to OC 670) cites a custom for poor children to collect tzedakah on Chanukah, as we are all one family and we care for each other in this spirit of unity. This truly is the mantra of Aharon Hakohen, and serves as a fitting consolation.

A second approach to this matter is rooted in another aspect of the korbanos Hanesim: the unique spirit of volunteerism that permeated these offerings. The Midrash notes that these korbanos were “nedavim,” voluntary gifts to Hashem. These offerings represented a sense of ahavas Hashem that motivated their actions. This, too, is an attribute that characterizes Aharon Hakohen, the father of all Kohanim, who are noted for their ahavas Hashem.

continued on page 8
The Fires of Chanukah and Havdalah

Rabbi Kenneth Brander
Dean, Center for the Jewish Future
Fellows Program 1997-2005

Ulla said: Two amoraim in the West disagree about [the interpretation] of this Tannaitic dispute, and they are R’ Yose bar Avin and R’ Yose bar Zevida. One of them said that Beit Shammai’s reason for requiring a continual decrease from eight lights to one is so that the various kindlings correspond to the number of days yet to come, and Beit Hillel’s reason for requiring a continual increase from one light to eight is so that the various kindlings correspond to the number of days already passed. And one of them said that Beit Shammai’s reason for requiring a continual decrease from eight lights to one is so that the various kindlings correspond to the bull [sacrifices] of the Sukkot festival, and Beit Hillel’s reason for the continual increase from one light to eight is the principle that in sacred matters we elevate, and do not lower, the degree of sanctity, uma’alín bakodesh v’n'moridin (Shabbat 21b).

Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel offer differing views on the kindling of the Chanukah lights. The second explanation, that the decreasing number of Chanukah lights is in some way connected to the sacrifices of Sukkot seems perplexing. After all, what is the connection between the lights of Chanukah and the sacrifices of Sukkot?

In order to explore this issue, we must recognize that this disagreement between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel is not limited to the fires of Chanukah but also emerges when discussing the bracha recited over the lighting of the havdalah candle.

Beit Shammai says: the text of the [havdalah] blessing over the flame is “Blessed are you Hashem, our God, King of the Universe who created illumination on the [original] fire,” š’v’ara ma’arí h’esh. Beit Hillel says: “Blessed are You… who creates the illuminations of the many fires”, borei m’orei ha’esh.

Fire is a unique creation. Adam and Chava were shown by God how to extract fire from nature (Bereishit Rabba, chap. 12). It was the first piece of matter to be created in partnership between God and humankind. The Talmud’s explanation (in Shabbat 21b) that Beit Shammai compares the candles to the sacrifices on Sukkot while Beit Hillel explains that one increases in holiness serves to connect these two issues; Chanukah and havdalah, as one conceptual argument between the two schools of thought.

When we recite havdalah after Shabbat, we are celebrating our reentry into the creative role we play in society. Havdalah is a call to all of our senses to engage, reminding us of the responsibility we have as God’s partner in completing the creative process. Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Shabbat 29.1) highlights that the institution of kiddush is recited twice every Shabbat. The first time, on Friday night, with kiddush sanctifying the Shabbat as the day of rest, and the second time as we sanctify the week, on motzei Shabbat through the institution of havdalah.

Both Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel recognize that the eish of Chanukah and havdalah represents humankind’s ability to affect society, to dispel the darkness in the world around us. For Beit Shammai the concern of what can occur to man as the social player is frightening. Perhaps he/she will not affect change but will rather become part of the darkness. Therefore Beit Shammai suggests that anytime fire, the original creative act of humankind and God, is used as a paradigmatic example of our engagement, this concern must be highlighted. For Beit Shammai, when lighting the Chanukah lights, the model must be the sacrifices of Sukkot, for on Sukkot we offer sacrifices for the 70 nations of the world, decreasing the amount daily, concluding with one sacrifice celebrating the unique relationship between God and Knesset Yisrael. Similarly with havdalah, the key concern is to remind us that our creativity must always be linked to God. Therefore, Beit Shammai suggests that on motzei Shabbat, we recite a bracha that heralds back to that original creative experience, to remind us of the original rendezvous between God and humankind. Hence, according to Beit Shammai, the bracha celebrates fire in the singular past tense, retreating to this original experience.

Beit Hillel does not disagree with the concerns of Beit Shammai but suggests that when eish is used as part of the ma’aseh mitzvah, we must use it to focus on the potential of humankind in our various creative endeavors. On Chanukah, we ascend in holiness, recognizing that we are never to retreat but must continue to add light in all our efforts to impact society. On motzei Shabbat, at the moment that we reengage with our creative talents, our focus must not be to withdraw to that original creative experience but rather, m’orei haEish —our capacity to create new lights and new energy in the world.

It is through this lens that we are able to understand the location in which the story of Chanukah appears in the Talmud, in the tractate of Shabbat.

What is [the reason for] Chanukah? For our rabbis taught: On the 25 of Kislev [commence] the days of Chanukah, which are eight... (Shabbat 21b).

Why did the rabbis choose the tractate of Shabbat to introduce the holiday of Chanukah? One would have thought that the tractate of Megillah, which discusses the other rabbinic holidays, would have been a more legitimate location for the placement of the laws and story of Chanukah. Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that while the experiences of Chanukah and Shabbat are distinct from each other, existentially they complement one another. Chanukah’s holiday experience symbolizes taking the light found in the Jewish home and allowing it to radiate in the public thoroughfare. All of the laws regarding the menorah’s location and time of lighting are predicated on the pedestrian’s ability to see its illumination in the public thoroughfare. Chanukah celebrates the Jews’ responsibility to be involved as an agent of change in society.

Yet this goal is only achievable when there is also the Shabbat experience. Shabbat is celebrated through the retreat from the public arena of life. Carrying objects between the private and the public domain is forbidden; so is carrying any object four amot in the public domain. The experience of Shabbat is primarily found within the privacy of the home. It is the Shabbat experience which strengthens our home, our personal spiritual epicenter. Introducing the festival of Chanukah in continued on page 8
The Fires of Chanukah and Havdalah

continued from page 7

the middle of Tractate Shabbat is a recognition that our national aspiration, that of perfecting the public thoroughfare, is only achievable when the private arena is reinforced. Conversely, when the Shabbat experience creates a permanent mindset—a withdrawal from the world community, an isolationist mindset—it becomes an obstacle to achieving the Divine agenda of nikun olam, the purpose of the Chosen People.

The Center for the Jewish Future is at its core the celebration of the above ideals. Our mission is to convene the energies of Yeshiva University and RIETS to help shape, enrich and inspire the contemporary Jewish community. Our foci are three:

**Inspiring students to play leadership roles:** Over the past year, 1000 students participated in service learning programs. Most recently, through the Blanche Schreiber Torah Tours over Simchat Torah, we sent 420 students to 80 communities throughout North America and the United Kingdom. This summer 20 of our students ran summer programs for the teenagers of Yerucham and Dimona, development towns in Israel’s south. These teenagers, who would have otherwise been on the street, grew in their own self esteem, were involved in intense English classes and saw Orthodox students who were not specifically involved in a kiruv agenda but were nevertheless wonderful role models of what it is to be an engaged observant Jew. This summer communities hosted summer kollelim in which over 70 of our students engaged with hundreds. In all of our programs the message we communicate to our students is their ability to be living lights, their ability to create positive energy in the Jewish world and society around us.

**Build, cultivate and support communities and their leadership:** This year we placed close to 100 rabbis and 48 rabbinic interns. Many in pulpits, as educators and administrators, and some in outreach positions. However, our responsibility does not end with placement. We continue to cultivate and support our alumni and communities. Over 125 rabbis have participated in our Yarchei Kallah. We have engaged in a formal mentoring program between 19 new rabbis with 12 senior rabbinic personalities. In the month of November and December 30 communities will gather with their rabbis and key lay leaders to explore ways in which they can learn to use their boards more effectively; inspire volunteers and strategically plan in these troubled economic times. All of this represents our ability to convene the energies of Yeshiva University to offer our community professionals and lay leaders the tools to create and strengthen communities to empower and support their constituents. These continuing educational opportunities allow our talmidim and alumni to be modern Maccabees, enabling them to create the spirit of Shabbat and Chanukah in the public and private thoroughfares of their communities.

Create a Global movement that promotes the values of RIETS and Yeshiva University:

Katz YU Torah with its two million monthly hits, our Arbesfeld Koll and Midreshet Yom Rishon, and Holiday To-Go Series represent the ideal of sharing the torah of YU with the larger community. The new spiritual lights that we kindle include our recent establishment of three new kollilem and outreach centers in the United States: the establishment of the Yeshiva University Torah Mitzvon Chicago Kollel, The South Florida Center for Jewish Life, the Jewish Study Network in which we are active partners in the San Francisco area, and our continued relationship with the Dallas community kollel. These initiatives allow our students to participate in wonderful spiritual incubators. The kollelim are nurtured by this collaborations of ideals found in Shabbat and Chanukah. They enable our students to keep growing in learning – continuing to experience the energy of Shabbat, while simultaneously giving them the opportunity to share their Torah and the Torah of our Yeshiva with the larger Jewish community, developing the energy of Chanukah.

As Jews, we are charged with the mission of bringing our light to the world. Following the teaching of Beit Hillel, we joyously confront the challenge of sharing our light in both the private and the public arenas through merging the spirit of Shabbat and the spirit of Chanukah.

Chomer L’Drush

Aharon’s Chanukah: Ahavas Yisrael and Ahavas Hashem

continued from page 6

Kohanim are members of the family of Levi, who immediately answered Moshe’s clarion call after the Chet HaEgel. The Gemara describes Kohanim as “Zerizim” (Pesachim 59b), as their love for Hashem and His mitzvos propels them to serve with alacrity. Perhaps Aharon felt disappointed that he too was not given an opportunity to express his ahavas Hashem and his desire to volunteer korbanos.

Here also, we can understand how the gift of the Chanukah menorah serves as an appropriate consolation. The entire essence of the mitzvah of hadlakas neros Chanukah is one of ahavas Hashem and volunteerism, as we will illuminate.

When the Gemara (Shabbos 21b) describes the mitzvah of nerus Chanukah, it provides three strata of fulfillment: the basic kiyum, mehadrin and mehadrin min hamehadrin. This framework of various levels of kiyum (that exist beyond standard hiddur mitzvah) is unique in halachah. What is even more fascinating is that the Shulchan Aruch, when citing this halacha (O.C. 671:2) only records the level of mehadrin min hamehadrin. This demonstrates that the spirit of mehadrin, and the ahavas Hashem that it demonstrates, is essential to the mitzvah of nerus Chanukah. This understanding resolves the question of the Pnei Yeoshua (Shabbos 21b), who wonders why the original miracle of pure oil was needed at all if we know that “tunah hutra b’tzibbur” and the Chashmonaim could have used impure oil? The Chashmonaim were teaching us this lesson of mehadrin, of not relying on the minimum requirement (of tunah hutra b’tzibbur) if it was possible to achieve a greater fulfillment. They wanted to be like the Nesim, like their ancestor Aharon Hakohen, and go beyond what was required of them. This notion, explains the Beis Halavi (Al HaTorah, Drush Chanukah), is why the Chashmonaim did not just create very thin wicks in order to sustain the small amount of oil, because: “The principle of the miracle was only for hiddur mitzvah.”

These two qualities of Aharon Hakohen and the Nesim—unity and volunteerism—are key elements of the mitzvah of Chanukah. They can serve as an inspiration to all of us as we illuminate our lives with greater ahavas Yisrael and ahavas Hashem.
The Gemara in Shabbos (21b) tells us the mitzvah to light Chanukah candles begins "from when the sun sets" (mishetshuka hachama). Rishonim differ with regard to the exact interpretation of this phrase, a dispute that directly impacts upon the practical ramifications of this Halacha. The Rambam (Hilchos Chanukah 4:5) rules that one must light at sunset (im shekiasa), not before and not later. This appears to be the understanding of the Vilna Gaon as well (Birur Halacha Orach Chaim 261:2), and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach stated that the longstanding tradition of Yerushalayim follows this approach (see Eliyahu Goldberg, Piskei Shnauos, 84). The Brisker Rav checked the accuracy of his clock annually before Chanukah to ensure he would light precisely at sunset (Ibid.).

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 672:1) writes that one lights at the end of the sunset process (im sof shekiasa), a phrase the Magen Avraham and the Bach understand as referring to nightfall (teis hakocharvon). This opinion appears earlier in the Mordechai (Hagados Mordechai 455) who reasons that lighting beforehand accomplishes very little as the sun's rays continue to provide ample light outside even after sunset until the dark of nightfall. The Mordechai further notes that the time between the start of sunset and nightfall is equivalent to four mil (commonly understood to be either 72 or 90 minutes as calculated in Israel on the equinox). This definition of nightfall according to Rabbeinu Tam (cited in Tosfos Shabbos 35a ss. trat) and in fact, the Shulchan Aruch himself follows Rabbeinu Tam in this regard (Orach Chaim 261:2).

The Mishna Berurah (672.1), however, cites a number of Rishonim who present a third interpretation of the Gemara. They define mishetshuka hachama as the completion of the first stage of sunset—3 ¼ mil after the beginning of sunset. Assuming an 18 minute mil, this means one lights at 58 ½ minutes after sunset.

Based on this analysis, Rabbi David Bar Chaim argues in his Knesses Zeman Halakos Ner Chanukah that there is no basis to light at nightfall as defined by the Vilna Gaon (approximately 25 minutes after sunset in New York City). Either one lights at sunset, or at nightfall as defined by Rabbeinu Tam, or at the slightly earlier time of 58 ½ minutes after sunset. In response, Rav Sorah Debitzki (cited in Rav Eliyahu Schlesinger’s Eida Han Moadai p. 67), justifies this practice as well, suggesting that once we define mishetshuka hachama as nightfall, that definition can be used to refer to halachic nightfall even as defined by the Vilna Gaon.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:101) writes that one should ideally light 10 minutes after sunset but the candles should burn until at least one half hour after nightfall. Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv also states that some light approximately 10 minutes after sunset to ensure we do not light before the actual halachic sunset (cited in Piskei Shnauos p. 85). The Chazon Ish lit his menorah approximately 20 minutes after sunset and explained that any earlier would be ineffective as there would still be ample light outside (Piskei Shnauos p. 86).

The obvious exception to this rule is Friday during Chanukah when one cannot light at sunset or later because it is Shabbos. The Shulchan Aruch therefore tells us (679:1) that we light Chanukah candles before lighting the Shabbos candles provided that it is already after plug hamimcha. One must be sure to add enough oil to allow the candles to burn until at least one half hour after nightfall (Mishnah Berurah 679:2). In addition, the Mishnah Berurah recommends davening mincha before lighting the menorah if possible.
Musmakhim in the Limelight: Spreading the Light Through Community Kollelim
One observes that the focus of Al Hanisim greatly differs from the message of the Talmudic text mai Chanukah. While the latter exclusively relates the miracle of the oil, the former only addresses the military victory. Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein (Baruch She’amarr pp. 145-146) discusses this question, which really pertains to Chanukah in general. He writes:

“Why does Al Hanisim only deal with the miracle of the military victory and not the miracle of the oil? In Pirkei Avot (5:5) we read about ten daily miracles in the precincts of the Beit Hamikdash. The Talmud (Yoma 21b) mentions additional miracles to the ten listed. Why are these not listed in the Mishnah in Avot? The rabbis concluded that only the very public miracles were used in Pirkei Avot. We can apply the same rationale to Al Hanisim. Its authors focused on the military victory since it was more of a public miracle. The miracle of the oil was not known and witnessed by as many people, so it was removed. Why does the Talmud ignore the miracle of the military victory? Because, notes Rabbi Epstein, it is natural for Hashem to side with the underdog, as stated in Kohelet (ch. 3). The purpose of the Syrian decrees was to cause the Jews to forget the Torah. So the Talmud, which was written for scholars, stresses the continuity of Torah. But for the layman, the war was an easier concept to grasp.”

The Aruch Hashulchan advances that Chanukah possesses elements that focus upon those sh’kudim b’koteli beit Hamedrash and, at the same time, those unlettered as well. Chanukah, it follows, is a festival dedicated simultaneously to chizuk krovim and kiruv r’chokim. We are mandated to open our windows and share the light that illuminates our lives. But we must be mindful to guard that which enters our home. The chidush of the Bnei Yissoschor - that we use oil for the mitzvah of nerot Chanukah since by nature it does not commingle with other liquids—also brings to the fore a theme of Chanukah.

There can be no more appropriate time than Chanukah to focus on our Yeshiva’s formal endeavors of kiruv and chizuk in the tri-state area and especially beyond. The bulk of this publication focuses on those initiatives.

For this particular feature however, we identified three musmakhim who have graduated kollel initiatives, yet continue to be a part of them. Rabbi Shaanan Gelman ’06R (RSG) was a kollel fellow in the Boca Raton Judaic Fellows Program, and accepted the position as rabbi of Kehillat Chovevei Tzion in Skokie, IL. In that capacity, he plays a major role in the newly-inaugurated Yeshiva University-Torah Mitzion Chicago Community Kollel. Rabbi Maury Grebenau ’04R (RMG) spent two years as a fellow in the Community Kollel of Dallas. He then accepted teaching positions in the community and has remained in Dallas, teaching in the local Jewish schools. Rabbi Joshua Strulowitz ’05R (RJS) served as program director and co-founder of Panim, a college outreach program, while studying at RIETS. Upon receiving semikah, he joined TORCH, Torah Outreach Resource Center of Houston. Since 2005 he has served as rabbi of Congregation Adath Israel in San Francisco, and was integral in helping place RIETS fellows in the Jewish Study Network-San Francisco. The perspectives these young rabbonim possess make for a fascinating discussion of the dual nature of Chanukah and the goals of these communal initiatives.

**CHAVRUSA: For you, what were your personal and professional goals in kollel? Did you accomplish your goals?**

**RJS:** My goals were to gain experience working in the Jewish community. My eventual goal was to enter the shul rabbinate, especially in a shul that was in community building mode. I wanted the opportunity to learn seriously for a few more years, while at the same time learning the ropes and getting comfortable in the role of teacher. I wanted to grow into the role without the immediate pressure and responsibility of being a shul rabbi. I also wanted to learn how an American Jewish community operates. To that point I had limited exposure to the different institutions that make up a Jewish community. My two years in the Houston kollel were invaluable to my professional growth, and I feel that I accomplished many of my desired goals.

**RSG:** With my mind set on going into the rabbinate, naturally I toyed with the idea of beginning my career as an assistant rabbi or a rabbinic intern. These opportunities would have provided me with ample training, but not the same variety and freedom as the kollel experience. I joined the Boca Raton Community Kollel with three primary objectives: to gain professional mentorship and pastoral training, to develop my teaching skills in a wide array of venues, from high level education to entry level outreach work, and to be able to continue my Torah studies all at the same time. My goals were ambitious and at most times possible to achieve. Notwithstanding, the greatest challenge I faced was to be able to maintain the same level of dedication to personal growth while dedicating half of my time to the community. Ultimately, though, as I have discovered, the rabbinate presents the same exact challenges.

**RMG:** I was looking to transition from full-time learning into full-time teaching. Being involved in two different schools and a shul, in conjunction with the kollel, honed my time management skills and gave me a broad understanding of Jewish community. The Community Kollel of Dallas was structured to allow us to teach in the morning and then have a full seder of learning in the afternoon, which allowed me a significant portion of the day dedicated to my own learning and growth while also gaining classroom experience. The opportunity to teach on both the high school and middle school level, as well as give classes in the shul to
Rabbi Maury Grebenau

adults, all while still having a full seder of my own personal learning, was very important to me.

CHAVRUSA: Based on your experiences, what are some of the ingredients that make a successful community kollel?

RMG: On the macro level, I think there needs to be a focus on communication amongst the kollelim. The challenges, programming ideas, and other aspect of the kollelim are shared issues. The other major issue would be that of recruitment and finding ways to facilitate, and even encourage, young musmakhim to participate in the kollel. The kollel initiative should be an opportunity to gain experience and transition into a full-time position.

RJS: From day one in San Francisco, I made it a priority to help bring a kollel to San Francisco. Every kollel is different, and every community is different. I think one of the most important things is for the kollel to clearly state what its goals are. To whom are they reaching out? Is it school based? Shul based? Outreach based? Too often people are scared of kollelim because they’re afraid that they will begin to take over existing institutions or create unnecessary competition. It’s advantageous to the entire institution if the rabbis function in a capacity that is akin to their natural calling.

RSG: Provide the kollel rabbis with the freedom and the trust to be able to create their own ‘portfolios’. Young musmakhim join kollelim for many different reasons. It is advantageous to the entire institution if the rabbis function in a capacity that is akin to their natural calling.

RJS: From day one in San Francisco, I made it a priority to help bring a kollel to San Francisco. Every kollel is different, and every community is different. I think one of the most important things is for the kollel to clearly state what its goals are. To whom are they reaching out? Is it school based? Shul based? Outreach based? Too often people are scared of kollelim because they’re afraid that they will begin to take over existing institutions or create unnecessary competition. It’s very important that the kollel develops strong relationships and builds trust with existing institutions, and makes sure that it finds an untapped niche in the community to which it can claim ownership.

CHAVRUSA: What do you think the priorities of YU kollelim should be?

RSG: Partnerships with local schools and local synagogues are essential toward the recognition and success of a community kollel.

RJS: It’s hard to fit kollelim into a box, because there are so many different types of kollelim based on the makeup of the community. I think some common priorities are to make sure that learning within the kollel is strong and that the kollel members serve as proper role models in the community. It can be difficult for the kollel members to be able to see themselves as role models. YU has a number of talented students who are well educated and worldly. In many ways YU is uniquely positioned to be influential in the world of kiruv. There does not need to be one type of kollel. YU can offer kollelim to help strengthen day schools and Modern Orthodox communities and, at the same time, work with unaffiliated Jews. The difficult part will be choosing in which communities kollelim should be inaugurated.

RMG: The goals and priorities of each kollel can, and probably should be, different but they must be made clear to candidates for the kollel and to the community at large. The structure and focus of the kollel members should clearly reflect the ideals of that community and kollel.

CHAVRUSA: What are your hopes for the community kollel in your city?

RMG: The Community Kollel of Dallas has brought in a number of couples who have chosen to remain in Dallas either as full-time educators or in some capacity in the shul. I would hope that the kollel continues to draw vibrant YU musmakhim who will continue to enhance the level of Torah in the schools as well as the shul. There are many people who are interested in learning more about their Judaism and enriching their lives. A kollel can be instrumental in providing these types of opportunities. My hope is that the kollel in Dallas continues to be a place where Torah is presented in an animated way which remains true to our traditions.

RJS: In San Francisco we are looking for the kollel to do a little bit of everything. To work with the community and work together in building the community’s infrastructure. However, my main hope is that they will be able to reach out to the vast numbers of unaffiliated Jews in San Francisco, and work towards connecting them in closer ways to Yiddishkeit. Plus, just having four young, frum, passionate couples living in our community will do wonders.

RSG: I hope to see the kollel distinguish itself as the premier institution for high-level Torah study and at the same time become the natural feeder for the next generation of Chicago’s educators and community leadership.

CHAVRUSA: What can YU and RIETS do to further promote kollelim and to help Jewish communities outside the tri-state area?

RMG: A kollel can’t function without vibrant bnei Torah who are interested in making an impact outside of the tri-state area. The process of going “out of town” to one of the kollelim needs to be user friendly and easily fit into the semikhah process. The challenge is to encourage young graduates, and perhaps even semikhah students in their last year, to join kollelim, without compromising their own learning. RIETS can also be an important bridge in terms of prospective kollel members in the bais midrash and the administration of a kollel. Those organizing kollelim need to be informed about what they should be doing to attract the talent they are looking for.

RJS: I completely agree with Rabbi Grebenau. I think the most important thing is exposure. So few YU students know what it means to be in an out-of-town community, and the benefits of living in one. And I’m speaking about b’alei batim as much as the RIETS students. As much as communities need rabbanim, they need talented and educated lay people, who can do so much for a community. To create a program where YU students would live in communities for a few years after graduation would be tremendous. I think that programs like the Aaron and Blanch Schreiber Torah Tours is a great start. Finding more and more ways to expose YU students to communities and to bring in community leaders to talk to students about their communities would be tremendously helpful.

RSG: Continue to function as a supporting and governing body, providing constant programming ideas and scholars, while at the same time, enable the development of individual kollelim based on their own unique circumstances, remembering that no two communities are identical.
Musmakhim in the Limelight

About the contributors

Born in Buffalo, NY and reared in the Bronx, Rabbi Shaanan Gelman earned a BS in computer science at Yeshiva College and Seninskah from RIETS. He spent three years studying in Israel, two at Yeshivat Hakotel and one at the Gruss Institute in Bayit Vegan. He was a kollel fellow in the Boca Raton Community Kollel, where he served as spiritual leader of the Elmore Lome Explanatory Service as well as held the Gimelstob Chair in Education at the local Jewish federation. In 2006 he was hired as the inaugural rabbi of Kehillat Chevevei Tzion in Skokie, IL, which has witnessed significant growth—from approximately 60 to 130 families. He is an active member of the Chicago Rabbinical Council as well as serving on the board of the Associated Talmud Torahs of Chicago. He and his wife Tziporah are the parents of Zerachya, Arvaham, and Daha.

Rabbi Maury Grebenau graduated from Yeshiva College, RIETS and the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. He served as a fellow in the Dallas kollel for two years where he taught in Akiba Academy’s middle school and the Yavneh Academy of Dallas High School. He also ran adult educational programming, gave shiurim and learned one-on-one with community members. Upon comple-
tion of his kollel tenure, he remained in Dallas and is currently in his second year as full-time faculty in the high school where he teaches Judaic studies, math, and handles Israel guidance for the boys. He is married to Malka (Meier). They have a one-and-a-half year old daughter Bayla.

Rabbi Joshua Strulowitz was raised in North Miami Beach, FL, and graduated from Hillel Day School. He attended Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim in Jerusalem, and was graduated cum laude from Yeshiva College with a BA in Economics and received an award for excellence in Talmudic studies. While at YU he was program director and co-founder of Panum, a college outreach program. He then spent two years at YU’s Gruss Institute in Jerusalem. He continued on to TORCH, a community kollel in Houston, TX where he taught numerous classes throughout the community including at NASA’s Johnson Space Center. In September 2005 he began his post as rabbi of Congregation Adath Israel in the Sunset District of San Francisco, where he has helped revitalize and grow the community. In 2007, he worked with Yeshiva University and the Jewish Study Network to bring to San Francisco the Jewish Study Network-San Francisco, a community kollel of four couples. Rabbi Strulowitz and his wife Bethany have three young daughters.

The Community Kollel and American Jewish Life

By Rabbi Dr. Adam S. Ferziger

For the past five years I have been observing the emergence of the community kollel as a significant institution for disseminating Torah knowledge and strengthening Jewish identity within American Jewish life. Unlike its institutional predecessors, the community kollel is not geared solely toward the greater Jewish community, and were intended to allow advanced students to develop their Talmudic acumen without being exposed to the complexities of the world outside the yeshiva enclave. From a socio-ideological perspective, moreover, they served to cultivate a large cadre of individuals who were committed to Torah study and—unlike the ‘modernists’—did not idealize integration into the broader culture.

The early 1970s witnessed a new stage in the development of the kollel in America. The concept was expanded to include institutions whose express goal was to interact with the local Jewish sur-

roundings and to consequently have a more direct influence upon them. “Community kollels” were established in neighborhoods that possessed a criti-
cal mass of observant Jews and existent Orthodox synagogues, but lacked a strong presence of learned individuals who were committed to rigorous halakhic observance. The aim was for a core group of advanced yeshiva students and their families to settle in such locales in order to raise communal interest in Torah study and over time engender a transformation in the nature of local Orthodox Jewish life. Notable examples of such a model are the community kollels in Toronto, Chicago and Los Angeles.

A new era in the emergence of the American community kollel was inaugurated in the late 1980s,
In 1986, Pinchas Peli published an article in Ha-Dorai about Maran Ha-Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, z”l, entitled “Ben Brisk le-Boston.” Among the striking comments therein was an account of the conversation he had with the Rav and his wife in the mid 1960s, in which they attested that as a result of their childhood experiences (in Eastern Europe), they were both still filled with fear whenever they would encounter a priest (even in America). Today’s young (Jewish) generation in America, the Rav continued, do not possess this instinctive aversion, and it is doubtful if it can ever be restored.

As a boy growing up in the late 1960s and 1970s in Queens, NY, and attending the YCQ (Yeshiva of Central Queens) elementary school, I certainly did not possess any fear of priests, be they Catholic or any other Christian denomination. Although my mother quite firmly instilled into my consciousness that I was and would forever be a proud Orthodox (and not Conservative or Reform) Jew, I possessed no hostility towards Catholics as such, whether as lay people or even as religious figures. Of course, in “real life,” I had absolutely no contact with Catholics of any kind. (And in the course of my life, that fact really hasn’t changed.) The only exception to this was a Mrs. Fitzpatrick, a retired in-nurse (half Italian, half Irish, she told me) who lived all alone, and whom everyone on my mostly frum block in Kew Gardens Hills (except for my mother) shunned.

The newspapers and books I read, movies and television shows that I watched and my absorption of Modern Orthodox Jewish American culture of the time all served to reinforce the notion that although Christians in general and Catholics in particular were not Jewish and not part of “us,” they were not, per se, “bad.” When I saw the film “The Sound of Music,” I watched the singing nuns who gave Julie Andrews moral support. And when I saw “Fiddler on the Roof,” I noticed an entire group of nuns who had come to see the Broadway show as well. Babe Ruth’s Catholicism was prominently displayed in my favorite book, Bob Considine’s “The Babe Ruth Story,” and the narrative included moving depictions of figures such as Brother Mathias, who tried to make sure that the Babe would not permanently end up on the wrong side of the tracks and instead would remain a good Catholic. In fact, when I began to realize that America was primarily a WASP country, I decided that in the political context, dinka Catholics and Jews in America had something in common. I loved the fact that John F. Kennedy was able to succeed where Al Smith had failed and had become the United States’ first Catholic president. I fervently hoped that a Jewish president would eventually follow, and the Catholic example lent credence to the possibility that some day it might actually happen. When I learned that Italy, like Ireland, was an overwhelmingly Catholic country, I realized that many of my favorite ballplayers, such as Joe Pepitone, and movie actors, such as Lou Costello, were also Catholic. Even the hilarious Yankee broadcaster Phil “the Scooter” Rizzuto and the Indy 500 champion Mario Andretti were Italian-American Catholics!

When I visited my grandparents’ house in North Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and the conversation eventually turned to politics (as it often seemed to do), it appeared that the local politicians favored by my grandfather, the rabbi of a local shul in the area, were almost all Catholic. Mario Procaccino, John Marchi, Mario Biaggi, anyone but the despised New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay, were all obviously Catholic. (I had long recognized that the marker of an Italian name was the vowel at the end.) As the late 60’s turned into the early and mid-70’s and discussions of Vietnam turned to arguments about Watergate, it seemed that some relatives of mine held a viewpoint later to be depicted in Jonathan Rieder’s book “Canarsie: the Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism,” and held that white Catholics could be perceived as allies of Jews. In any event, the particular vicissitudes of New York City politics did not serve to cause me to obtain negative feelings about Catholics.

In the 17th century, Molière’s comedy “Le bourgeois Gentilhomme” satirized the pretensions of a Monsieur Jordain, and in one of the funniest jokes of the play, he discovers that he has “been speaking prose his entire life, and didn’t even know it!” I can carry his humorous conceit further. By the time I was in sixth grade in YCQ and started to learn more Gemara and Dinim, I also was starting to hear more about differences within the community of Orthodox Jews. I realized that not just a practical but a theoretical worldview distinguished those who, like my mother, accepted R. Moshe Feinstein’s z”l’s lenient position regarding halav stam in America and others, such as my Tely Yeshiva connected cousins from Cleveland, who did not. I also began to learn various Talmudic passages regarding idolators. For my part, I was instinctively inclined to posiq like R. Menachem Ha-Meiri, who famously distinguished between the idolaters of Talmudic times and the Christians of his time and place, that is, 14th century Perpignan, in southern France. Moreover, I applied his shitah to 20th-century New York; I just didn’t know that I was doing it!

There was one glaring exception to the benign attitude that I had absorbed, however, and that was the Pope. The first Pope I remember was Pope Paul VI. A year and a half after the Six Day War, in December 1968, Israel conducted a bombing raid in Lebanon and the Pope criticized Israel’s behavior. “How dare the Pope criticize Israel!” exclaimed Mar Katz, my third grade Hebrew teacher at YCQ. “The Pope did nothing during the Holocaust, when six-and-a-half million Jews were killed!” My mother would often criticize the Pope and the Vatican hierarchy as well. “Why won’t the Pope simply recognize the State of Israel? Why won’t he allow us to keep Jerusalem and the Kotel? Why does he constantly talk about the internationalization of Jerusalem?”

Prominently, I understood this not as a religious condemnation, but a political-national one. Even if the reason for the Vatican’s stance was the Roman Catholic theological position as understood by the Pope, the consequence meant that the Vatican was simply in line with countries such as the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, which had broken relations with Israel after the Six Day War, and the Arab countries, which were all aligned against Israel. The Jews have a right, as expressed in Tanach and in the 20th century by the Balfour Declaration, to a state, and only reshim would deny it to us. Le-ma’aseh, Pope Paul in my
mother's eyes (and my own) was another Aleksey Kosygyn, the leader of the Soviet Union, who also directed sentiments against the State of Israel. Even the charge of moral hypocrisy that I inferred (how dare the Pope present himself as a moral leader when he can't daven us Israel) seemed to be not so much an attack against the religious tenets of Catholicism but as an illustration of a severe and fatal moral, ethical flaw. At a certain point, however, as I began to learn more and more about the Crusades, the Inquisition, horrible crimes and horrendous false accusations that both uneducated people and prominent officials of the Church had hurled against the Jews over the years, I realized that the attacks against the Pope that I had heard were fundamentally explanations of pain at the entire history of the attitude of the Catholic Church vis-a-vis the Jews. I still sharply distinguished, nonetheless, between the present day situation and ‘back then’ in Europe. But when I heard the mention of ‘the Pope’, it often seemed that the speaker, through the mere mention of his name, was transported back in time, to a period in which the Jews could not even take the existence of their lives for granted.

In my high school years at MTA, when I started to ‘get into learning’ and especially in a camp I attended for granted.

“for my part, I was instinctively inclined to poseq like R. Menachem Ha-Meiri, who famously distinguished between the idolaters of Talmudic times and the Christians of his time and place ... Moreover, I applied his shitah to 20th century New York.”

When I served as the rabbinic advisor to the Yeshiva University honors group travelling in Italy this past summer, and I met numerous Italian Catholics in Italy, all these memories came back to me. In this vein, I would like to share one vignette, concerning an event that took place at the Vatican Museums. (I ruled that the group could enter the museum but not the Sistine Chapel.)

“I have long realized that ‘museum guides’ often don’t know much more than the material on the index cards they have only partially memorized. (My favorite story on that score is the art museum guide in Chicago, who, when told that Marc Chagall was born in Vitebsk, replied, ‘Wrong! He was born in Russia!’) At the Vatican Museums, we dutifully began to put on our earphones, so we could listen to the guide. She started by saying, ‘Shut down your cell phones! Having cell-phones on when you don’t need to is bad for the environment and this destruction is the real Holocaust, worse than any other!’

What? I had just heard something bizarre, but I just ignored it. I noticed some of the members of the group also had a quizzical expression on their faces. Then, she mentioned something (I don’t recall exactly) about the Jews in Italy at the time of the Roman Empire, and how the Christian message of salvation was an attempt to provide real eternal life for everyone. What was going on here, I wondered. We’re supposed to be hearing a historical lecture! She obviously realizes we’re Jews! Does she feel an obligation to remind us of our blindness? A few minutes later, she started to talk about gravestones and catacombs. She mentioned that the figure of the swastika can be found on several of them. But then she continued. ‘The swastika really is a symbol of life—not of death! All civilizations have symbols that can be used for life or for death. Jews also have symbols of death. The swastika is really for life.”

What was that all about? This is becoming insane! I finally spoke up and said something along the following lines. “The Jews didn’t kill six million people, but the Nazis who wore swastikas on their uniforms did! They put Jewish men, women and children into ovens and burned them to death! For the Jews that were killed, the swastika of the Nazi murderers certainly was a symbol of death! What are you talking about?”

The tour guide (some tour this was turning out to be!) immediately responded, ‘I’m not prejudiced against Jews! Why, my family cried when the maid in our relatives’ house was taken away.”

Luckily, Professor John Hogan, who accompanied us on our tour, convinced the guide to ‘take another group’ as ‘we could manage by ourselves.’ We concluded the rest of the tour of the Vatican sans earphones, and sans the obnoxious tour guide.

Following our return to New York, I reflected upon the incident. The accumulation of all those gratuitous comments certainly made it reasonable to construe the tour guide’s comments as anti-Semitic. She simply seemed to have a compulsion to make nasty remarks to the obviously Jewish group she had the misfortune to lead, remarks that she surely knew would be offensive. On the other hand, she seemed genuinely unlike any other non-Jew we met and talked to in Italy. In fact, the general impression I received of the population in Italy was that of people who were formally Catholic but not substantively religious, although this was perhaps a result of previous reading about Italians and an assumption that what I saw fortified what I had read. But at the end of the day, the only anti-Semitism we encountered on the tour was connected to the Vatican, and by way of association, to the Pope. I wondered if she was in any sense a personally religious Catholic. I had no way of knowing, but somehow, it seemed fitting that davka in the Vatican, the home of the Pope, someone would make malicious comments to a group of Jews regarding the swastika and regarding ‘other, real’ holocausts.

Yet in an unexpected way, the “tour guide from hell” seemed to confirm the distinction that I absorbed from my mother between contemporary Americans who happen to be Catholic and ‘the Pope.’ We thank God that we live in the United States of America, where anti-Semitism is rare, and is not a real factor in our lives. We must never forget, however, that even today, 40 plus years after Vatican II, there are still some people that will simply resent Jews, in the final analysis, because we are still here. Some of
The Community Kollel and American Jewish Life

continued from page 13

when “kiruv” or “outreach” kollels were founded by graduates of the Lithuanian-style yeshivas with the express purpose of addressing nonobservant and unaffiliated North American Jews. Not long after, in 1994, another community kollel initiative known as Torah Me’itzion (Torah from Zion, henceforth TMZ) was founded through a partnership between American Modern Orthodox communities and Israeli religious Zionist yeshivas. Groups of Israeli yeshiva graduates were brought to American locales for one or two years, together with a more seasoned Israeli Talmud instructor, to buttress the efforts of the local rabbinical and educational staffs. In 1997, Rabbi Kenneth Brander opened a Modern Orthodox community kollel in Boca Raton which was staffed primarily by RIETS graduates. This was YU’s first involvement in the community kollel movement and serves as a model for some of the more recent initiatives being advanced by its Center for the Jewish Future (CJF).

This third stage is marked by a proliferation in numbers. In the course of this expansion, additional sub-types of community kollels have spun off that integrate aspects of both the kiruv kollel and TMZ, and respond to some of the deficiencies that have been identified in each.

In accounting for the emergence of the new community kollels, attention should be paid to the influence of both internal developments within American Judaism, as well as broader themes in American society in general and specifically American religion. The increase since the 1980s in collective confidence, economic strength and manpower of the Haredi (non-hasidic yeshiva world) wing of American Orthodoxy, has allowed for a lowering of the defense walls that were set up in the mid-20th century to neutralize any possible contamination that might come from intense involvement with nonobservant Jews. Concurrently, heightened concern by almost all Jewish parties over the dramatic rise of intermarriage rates among North American Jews has led to greater receptivity to any efforts to stem radical assimilation that has transcended denominational lines. The new community kollels, which emphasize individual intellectual interaction and development, have arisen as well in light of an American context that has been characterized as suffering from a “bowling alone” syndrome that focuses on the self rather than collective involvement, while simultaneously celebrated as a “generation of seekers” on a continual quest for spiritual meaning. A certain degree of affinity can also be identified between the new community kollels that offer an alternative to the large community synagogue center and the increasing trend toward “small group” worship within American religion as an alternative to the mega-house of worship culture of the late 20th century.

There are three areas that distinguish the community kollel from other banner institutions within Jewish life and illustrate its unique potential for addressing the intellectual and spiritual proclivities of contemporary Jewry. First, as opposed to a formal school or yeshivah that demands a great deal of infrastructure to function, the initial “start-up” costs and bureaucratic hurdles entailed in establishing a kollel are relatively low. Second, unlike the synagogue that is anchored by collective prayer and ritual, community kollels concentrate on study and the personal development of the individual. Finally, due to its cohesive staff and informal nature, it has the flexibility to adjust quickly to the ever-evolving environments of the 21st century.

Community kollels influence their surroundings both by increasing the numbers of local Jews who are involved directly in Torah study and introducing them to a cadre of young and idealistic families that are devoted to Jewish continuity and values. The communities who sponsor such kollels stand the opportunity to enrich the overall quality of their Jewish environments and possibly add quality manpower to their local institutions as well. For such scenarios to come to fruition, however, it is imperative that they see the kollels as long-term investments and create appropriate vehicles for sustaining and evaluating them.

The families who choose to dedicate themselves for a few years to such environments are treated to a unique opportunity. They are able to continue their own religious/intellectual developments, and in parallel hone their skills as disseminators of Torah, and explore the possible environments in which their abilities can best be utilized. YU is to be applauded for promoting the establishment of community kollels that are manned by its graduates. It is hoped they will serve as effective vehicles for inculcating the vitality and dynamism that have characterized YU over the last few years within the broader American Modern Orthodox spectrum.

Rabbi Dr. Adam S. Ferziger (YC, BRGS, RIETS, 1980-1985) is the Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus Fellow and vice chairman of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Jewry, at Bar-Ilan University. He is the author, among others, of “Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity” (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). Since 2003, he has published numerous studies that address the development of the American community kollel.

Footnotes

1. Ha-Do‘ar, Vol. LXV, #36, 1 Elul 5747 (Sept. 1986), pp. 3-7. (The article, of course, was written in Hebrew. The relevant passage can be found on the bottom of p. 6.)
We gratefully acknowledge those who participate in the RIETS CJF Kollel Initiatives around North America

YU Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago • Jewish Study Network, San Francisco • DRS Kollel, Woodmere, NY • Jewish Center Kollel, New York, NY • South Florida Center for Jewish Leadership and Learning • RAMAZ (Men’s and Women’s Program), New York, NY • The Frisch School (Men’s and Women’s Program), Paramus, NJ

Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future Department of Community Initiatives.
Rabbi Kenneth Brander Dean • Rabbi Aaron Leibowitz Director • Phil Moskowitz Program Manager

Roshei Kollel
Rabbi Reuven Brand Chicago • Rabbi Avi Leibowitz San Francisco
Rabbi Shmuel Marcus DRS • Rabbi Yehuda Willig Jewish Center

Executive Directors
Phil Karesh Chicago • Rabbi Shaye Guttenberg San Francisco • Rabbi David Gutterman South Florida

Kollel Fellows
Esti Arfe RAMAZ • Rabbi Noah Baron Chicago • Rabbi Avi Billet South Florida • Michael Borenstein Frisch • Rabbi Mendel Breitstein Chicago • Yocheved Brody RAMAZ • Joshua Brown Jewish Center • Noach Chesis Jewish Center • Rabbi Joshua Flug South Florida • Daniel Fridman Jewish Center • Rabbi Yaakov Gibber South Florida • Zev Goldberg Jewish Center • Ezra Goldschmidt DRS • Saul Haimoff RAMAZ • Marc Herman Jewish Center • Yishai Hughes RAMAZ • Rabbi Aaron Leibtag Chicago • Mira Leifer Frisch • Darren Levin Frisch • Josh Marder San Francisco • Yoni Posnick DRS • David Pri Chen Chicago • Yosef Schwartz Chicago • Aaron Segal Chicago • Michael Shteilitz Chicago • Jonathan Spier Frisch • Irit Sterling Frisch • Efrayim Unterman Frisch • Tzvi Urkowitz RAMAZ • Ira Wallach Chicago • Chezky Wasser DRS • Dave Weinberg DRS • Zvi Weiss Jewish Center • Matan Wexler RAMAZ • Moshe Winograk DRS • Simcha Willig Jewish Center • Ephraim Zlotnick DRS

We also proudly salute the more than 80 Yeshiva University faculty and students who participated in the successful summer kollelim across North America this past summer.
Chicago Summer Kollel • Denver Summer Kollel • Edmonton Summer Kollel • LA Summer Kollel • Passaic Summer Kollel • Teaneck Summer Kollel and Women’s Beit Midrash Program • Toronto Summer Kollel
Lifecycles

Publications
Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Rosenberg '74R has published a revised and expanded edition of his book “Public Speaking: A Guide for Study” (2008). The new edition contains chapters on motivation and leadership as well as interview techniques. Dr. Rosenberg is teaching Communication at Sy Syms School of Business.

Rabbi Dr. Charles A. Spira ’51R on the publication of his book “Prayer: The Soul’s Dialogue.”


“Melting Pot: Embarking on Israel’s Seventh Decade with Spiritual and Savory Servings” by Dafy Forer features some rabbinic alumnus as contributors, such as: Rabbi Hershel Billet ’74R; Rabbi Chaim Brevender ’65R; Rabbi Yehoshua Fass ’98R; Rabbi Elazar Muskin ’81R and Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin ’63R.

Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Rosenberg ’74R lead and appeared in a post-show discussion of “The Quarrel,” a play by David Brandes and Rabbi Joseph Telushkin ’73R.

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Zalman Eisenstein on the publication of his book “Pulpit Rhetoric in the Seventh Decade with Spiritual and Savory Servings” by Dafi Forer. Rabbi Eisenstein is also to great-uncles Rabbi Shlomoh ’80R and Sherry Krupka ’87R and Chashi Krupka as well as the uncle, RIETS Student Yehuda and Ilana Turetsky on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Dr. Howard ’08R and Naomi Apfel on the marriage of their daughter Avigail to Baruch Zvi, son of Rabbi Hanoch and Aidel Teller, of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Zalman Eisenstein on the publication of his book “Prayer: The Soul’s Dialogue.”

Rabbi Dr. E. Yechiel ’55R and Natalie Simon on the birth of their son, Ari Katz to Shari Sperling and on the marriage of their grandson, Yehoshua Menachem, to their grandchildren, Rabbi Gary ’08R and Leba Guttenberg. Also to great-uncles Rabbi Shlomoh ’80R and Sherry Krupka and Rabbi Moshe ’87R and Chashi Krupka as well as the uncle, RIETS Student Yehuda and Ilana Turetsky on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Jason ’56R and Sandy Kalinsky on the birth of their granddaughter, Shira Nechama, to their children Rabbi Yosef ’03R and Elievsha Kalinsky on the birth of a granddaughter, Shayna Rina, to Eli and Elissa Sladowsky; and on the marriage of their daughter, Michal, to Yoni Frankel of Teaneck, NJ.

Rabbi Menachem ’78R and Rina Schrader on the birth of a grandson in Yerushalayim.

Rabbi Yaakov ’02R and Tova Lerner of Ramat Beit Shemesh.

Rabbi Neil ’83R and Laura Turk on the birth of their son Yitz on Talia Goldberg.

Rabbi Dr. Joel Hecker ’90R and Dr. Frani Pollack on the birth of their son, Hanina Ro’i, in December 2007.

RIETS student David and Ariella Hellman on the birth of their son, Tuvia Elisha.

Rabbi William ’55R and Sylvia Herskovitz, on the bar mitzvah of their grandson David Herskovitz and on the marriage of their grandson Ari Katz to Shari Sperling.

Rabbi Dr. E. Yechiel ’55R and Natalie Simon on the birth of their son, Baruch Zvi, son of Rabbi Hanoch and Aidel Teller, of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Yitzchak ’56R and Fay Sladowsky on the birth of a great grandson, Akiva Menachem, to their grandchildren, Rabbi Gary ’08R and Leba Guttenberg.

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Zalman Eisenstein on the publication of his book, “Pulpit Rhetoric in the Seventh Decade with Spiritual and Savory Servings” by Dafi Forer. Rabbi Eisenstein is also to great-uncles Rabbi Shlomoh ’80R and Sherry Krupka and Rabbi Moshe ’87R and Chashi Krupka as well as the uncle, RIETS Student Yehuda and Ilana Turetsky on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Yaakov ’02R and Talya Starr on the birth of their son, Adin Avraham.

Rabbi Raymond Sultan ‘06R on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Fabian ’52R and Ruth Schonfeld (grandparents) and Rabbi Ephraim ’76R and Aidel Buchwald (parents) on the marriage of Shira Schonfeld (daughter of Yael and Perry Schonfeld) to Naftali Buchwald.

Rabbi Lawrence ’93R and Nehama Teitelman on the birth of twins, Temima Etta and Binyamin. RIETS student Yehuda and Ilana Turetsky on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Dr. Joel Hecker ’90R and Dr. Frani Pollack on the birth of their son, Hanina Ro’i, in December 2007.

RIETS student David and Ariella Hellman on the birth of their son, Tuvia Elisha.

Rabbi William ’55R and Sylvia Herskovitz, on the bar mitzvah of their grandson David Herskovitz and on the marriage of their grandson Ari Katz to Shari Sperling.

Rabbi Dr. E. Yechiel ’55R and Natalie Simon on the birth of their son, Baruch Zvi, son of Rabbi Hanoch and Aidel Teller, of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Yitzchak ’56R and Fay Sladowsky on the birth of a great grandson, Akiva Menachem, to their grandchildren, Rabbi Gary ’08R and Leba Guttenberg.

Rabbi Yaakov ’02R and Talya Starr on the birth of their son, Adin Avraham.

Rabbi Raymond Sultan ‘06R on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Fabian ’52R and Ruth Schonfeld (grandparents) and Rabbi Ephraim ’76R and Aidel Buchwald (parents) on the marriage of Shira Schonfeld (daughter of Yael and Perry Schonfeld) to Naftali Buchwald.

Rabbi Lawrence ’93R and Nehama Teitelman on the birth of twins, Temima Etta and Binyamin. RIETS student Yehuda and Ilana Turetsky on his marriage to Ora Klein of Oceanside, NJ.

Rabbi Yaakov ’02R and Talya Starr on the birth of their son, Adin Avraham.
RIETS-CJF Augment Kollel Initiatives

continued from page 5

Manhattan, and summer kollelim in seven communities across North America.

Now in its sixth year, the Dallas Community Kollel, in partnership with Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future, remains committed to teaching Torah to the broader Dallas community. Under the leadership of Rabbi Ari Perl ’00R, Rabbi of Congregation Shaare Tefilla, and RIETS musmakhim Rabbi Jay Weinstein ’08R and Rabbi Joe Hirsch ’07R, the Kollel is uniquely positioned to focus its work on reinforcing and enriching the Torah Umadda affiliated communities of the Shaarei Tefillah community, the parent and student body of Yavneh Academy, and, in partnership with the local federation and other local Jewish agencies, promoting Jewish literacy and education among the unaffiliated community.

Locally, CJF - RIETS administer school kollelim in Ramaz, the Frisch School and DRS. Rabbi Shmuel Marcus serves as Rosh Kollel at the D.R.S kollel, Rabbi Jay Goldmintz ’81R mentors the fellows at the RAMAZ kollel and Mrs. Shainy Zudick, a principal at the Frisch school, who serves as the educational mentor for the Frisch kollel fellows. The goal of these kollelim is to expose high school students to the enthusiasm and warmth of RIETS students and to provide RIETS students with meaningful exposure to Jewish education. YU students serve as ambassadors embedded within New York’s leading Yeshiva high schools. They have the opportunity to serve as role models for the high school students and are viewed by the schools’ administration and faculty as an integral part of the educational and spiritual growth of the students. In turn, the YU students are mentored by leading figures in Jewish education and have the opportunity to experience education hands-on.

In addition, CJF and RIETS operate a kollel in the Jewish Center. Students in the Jewish Center kollel follow the Katz kollel curriculum under the guidance of Rabbi Hershel Schachter ’67R and Jewish Center Rosh Kollel Rabbi Yehuda Willig ’06R. The kollel fellows at the Jewish Center serve on the rabbinic staff of the synagogue, receive personal attention which helps nurture them as young talmidei chachamim, and deliver chaburot.

In addition, students involved in school kollelim have the ability to fulfill their Azrieli student-teaching credits and receive fourth-year shimush from RIETS.

Summer Kollelim

This summer, more than 70 Yeshiva University undergraduate and RIETS students and YU rabbinic faculty brought the spirit and values of YU to communities across North America through its seven distinctive summer kollel programs. Created in partnership with local rabbis and lay leaders, the kollelim enriched communities through a variety of exciting classes and educational programming, while developing the leadership and teaching skills of kollel participants. The kollelim, which took place in Los Angeles, Chicago, Denver, Passaic, Teaneck, Toronto and Edmonton, Canada, also proved a valuable opportunity for its members to harness their creativity under the guidance and mentorship of Roshei Kollel, CJF staff, and expert rabbis. The communities benefit by experiencing the vast resources of Yeshiva University in their own back yard.

Toronto

Looking forward, CJF and RIETS are excited to expand their vision of a ‘yeshiva without walls’ with the September 2009 launch of a new full-time kollel in Toronto, Canada. Having recently seen an influx of YU programming, the Toronto community has rallied around the idea for a kollel, and under the leadership of Mr. Mo Lidsky, national director of Canadian operations of Yeshiva University, and president of the Canadian Board, Mr. Eli Rubinstein, over $2.5 million dollars has already been raised to support the full time kollel. Recruitment for the kollel will begin in December followed by a complete kollel launch in September 2009.