

B'YACHAD

TOGETHER
THE ELECTRONIC
ALUMNI NEWSLETTER
OF OHR SOMAYACH



Issue #14

Nissan 5758

"Mah Nishtanah" At Ohr Somayach

By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

The high point of the Pesach Seder is when the young child, grandchild or guest asks the Jew privileged to lead the Seder: "Mah Nishtanah?"

In this "Virtual Pre-Pesach Seder" I can imagine every one of our former *talmidim* asking: "Mah Nishtanah" — what is different at Ohr Somayach?"

Well, it would take an entire "Haggadah" to fully answer that question, but we will try to give you a condensed picture of what is doing with our activities in Jerusalem and with our alumni throughout the world.

The numbers are, *baruch* Hashem, growing in all departments. In our English-speaking section this has compelled us to break down the Beis Medrish level to several focused components in which former *talmidim* are playing important roles :

Dovid Speyer and Avrohom Connack on the Advanced Level; Avrohom Rockmill and Aaron Brodie on the new Intermediate Level; Shlomo Wiener, Saul Mandel and Yacov Asher Sinclair in the one-year "Center" Program; and Nachie Brickman in the "Derech" Program for high school graduates scheduled to begin in the fall.

The population explosion in the Israeli Department has forced us to rent broader facilities for it on Rechov Shmuel Hanavi, but we are quickly running out of room there as well. (The old "Mi Li" building is occupied by our Russian "Ohr-Dessa" High School for the products of our highly successful program in Odessa serving some 700 kids!)

Former *talmidim* are playing important educational roles in our constantly expanding Hebrew, Russian and Spanish-speaking departments.

This is "what is different" at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem — *talmidim* joining the ranks of their *rabbeim*.

But not only in Jerusalem.

In London, the new Jewish Learning Exchange Center in Golders Green, headed by Danny Kirsch, received an important boost for its explosive expansion of activities with the arrival of Brian Rubenstein. Gary Gilbert is the newest addition to the great Johannesburg team led by Larry Shain. A major dinner for our Miami branch highlighted the great work being done in Florida by Shmuel Kalos, Jonathan Ried and Yacov Zier.

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CLOSING ONE CHAPTER, OPENING ANOTHER

Zev Kahn recently completed the Ohr Lagolah teacher's training course and is heading to Chicago where he will be taking up a position as Associate Director of Outreach at the Chicago Community Kollel. Zev spoke to us on the eve of his departure.

B'Yachad: What are you most excited about?

Zev: I'm most excited about putting the skills I've acquired here at Ohr Somayach — both inside and outside the *beis midrash* — to full use for *Klal Yisrael* in an environment which will make use of my potential. The Chicago Community Kollel is a professionally run operation which has been very successful. I am very excited about contributing to such an organization.

I will be developing meaningful relationships with people in a thriving Jewish community in the Midwest, a part of the United States I have visited before and which I have found to be very warm and hospitable.

I'm especially excited about renewing my friendship with my first (and longest) *chavrusa* here at Ohr Somayach, Joel Klein. (His wife was a roommate of my wife's at Neve and she is also looking forward to renewing the friendship). Also I'll be working with Rabbi Yehoshua Karsh, who was a teacher here at Ohr Somayach when I first arrived, and is a personal friend.

B'Yachad: What will you be doing in Chicago?

Zev: As my title suggests I'll be doing outreach - to the non-committed or minimally committed Jews in the Greater Chicago area. I will be assisting Rabbi Francis, the Rosh Kollel, in expanding the program they have. I hope to increase the number of participants in existing classes and programs and begin new classes, including some of my own. I'll be coordinating the monthly luncheon/lecture series entitled "A Buffet of Jewish Thought." I'll be organizing retreats and symposiums, faxing and e-mailing Torah literature and helping to further develop the Kollel's website, as well as distributing video and audio tapes.

B'Yachad: You must have mixed feelings about leaving *Eretz Yisrael* after six years here?

Zev: The important perspective to have is that I'm not "leaving." I'm "going" somewhere. As Rabbi Lazerus, director of Ohr Lagolah, told me shortly before I decided to accept the position, you have to do what Hashem

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ONE CHAPTER *Continued*

wants you to do. And right now we feel that this is the best move for our family (and the Jewish people) from a material and spiritual point of view. At the same time I will miss *Eretz Yisrael* deeply, more so as time goes by. I'll miss *Yerushalayim*, Tsfas, Shabbos here, the *chagim*, Mea Shearim. I could go on. And of course, Ohr Somayach itself and all the friends and *rebbeim* I've had the privilege of getting to know and learn from over the last six years. *Eretz Yisrael* is inside me and I hope to carry some of it with me to Chicago and to inspire others to come visit Israel and learn about their Jewish heritage.

B'Yachad: What about leaving Ohr Somayach?

Zev: When I told Rabbi Schiller that I felt bad about leaving Ohr Somayach he told me: "Zev, you'll always be part of the family." That was very encouraging. I do feel part of a larger family and I will maintain the connection. There is an Ohr Somayach representative in Chicago, Rabbi Yehuda Albin, and over 150 Ohr Somayach alumni. The rabbis from *Yerushalayim* visit regularly, and I hope to be able to return to visit Israel occasionally myself. Besides, I'm only an email away.

Ohr Somayach is named after Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk. Meir Simcha is also the name of our second son. As I said at his *bris*, half in jest: "Even though we might be leaving, the Ohr Somayach will always be close to our hearts."

If you live in Chicago, know someone who does, or you happen to be passing through, you can contact Zev at the Chicago Community Kollel (phone 773-262-9400, email cckollel@aol.com).

"Mah Nishtanah" *Continued*

Our Ohr Lagolah Leadership Training Program has placed a score of graduates in rabbinic, educational and outreach positions. Zev Kahn, who was a coordinator while in the Program, is joining Yehoshua Karsh in outreach for the Chicago Community Kollel, and Yisroel Koval is taking an outreach position in the Chicago community of Buffalo Grove.

Speaking of reaching out, the Internet outreach program led by Moshe Newman, and enjoying the talents of Reuven Lauffer, Mordechai Becher and Reuven Subar, is setting new records each month with its Ohrnet service. (Getting close to 400,000 "hits" a month!) Newest addition is a university-style course in Chumash now in its second semester with plans for a Jewish Holiday Handbook series in the fall.

So there it is — part of the answer to your question of "Mah Nishtanah." We invite you to keep asking, and we hope to always have such exciting answers to offer you.

Chag Kosher V'somayach,

Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Simchas & Announcements

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ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. ZEV GREENBERGER
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. YONASON BLUMENTHAL
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. RAPHAEL LEBAN
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. SRULI KOVAL
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. MORDECHAI MINDEL
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. PENUEL PERRY
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. MORDECHAI BLALOCK
ON THEIR WEDDING

MR. AND MRS. VINCE KROLIKOWSKI
ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR SON

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ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR DAUGHTER

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