

THE JEWISH STAR

Independent and original reporting from the Orthodox communities of Long Island

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To all of our advertisers and readers

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IN MY VIEW

Victory on and off the court

BY ELLIOT STEINMETZ

The following is an excerpt of a message from the Coach of Hebrew Academy of Nassau County's Varsity Boys Basketball Team, which he sent in a letter to HANC's administrators and parent body after their championship win.

Now that I have had an opportunity to gather my thoughts, I am sitting down to write my annual post-season letter.

When I was too excited to fall asleep last night, I couldn't help but think about what I wanted to write to all of you. My mind immediately went to last year's letter and I went back and read it over twice. I found out something amazing. I could practically just re-send my letter from last season and call it a day. The attitude and class with which these kids handle themselves is what makes them winners and champions. The way they play on

the court is just a bonus. It is a privilege each year for my family and me to be around the HANC kids, faculty and parents. There is nothing greater than to have my two sons being able to root for, look up to, and spend time with the HANC students and family.

"The attitude and class with which these kids handles themselves is what makes them winners. The way they play on the court is just a bonus."

We have a rule on the HANC basketball team — we do not celebrate a win until we shake hands with the opposing team. We also do not celebrate anything but a championship on the court; we celebrate in our locker room. We have had this rule for a few years now. What I found special was that this year I never had to repeat it. At the end of each game, before I would even have a chance to say anything, our players were already telling each other how to act. They were reminding themselves what comes first.

This impressed me tremendously as well about this year's team. They had such a swagger and confidence on the court. They knew they could play with anybody. There was no fear. But after the game ended, they always did the right thing — congratulate the other team on a great season and do not embarrass them in front of their fans by celebrating on the floor. Even yesterday, in the championship game, in our last timeout we decided as a team to shake hands with Flatbush prior to our celebration. That is not an easy decision for high school players to make, but we should be proud of them because it was their choice and the right one.

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Preparing for Pesach



Photo courtesy thefivetowns.com

Batsheva Katz gathered with other Tomchei Shabbos-Yad Yeshaya volunteers on Sunday to organize and deliver Pesach packages to 250 local families.

Local car dealers driven down by economic slump

BY YAFFI SPODEK

The auto industry's economic woes are well known but local car dealers and leasing outfits are also feeling the pain, reporting significant losses. Many of their best customers have downshifted into cheaper cars.

"We are down about 60 to 70 percent in business," said Richard Cirillo, dealer principal at Victory Toyota of the Five Towns. "There has been a major decrease in sales,

both in buyers and leasers."

The dramatic decline has forced the Inwood dealership to lay off 60 percent of its employees. "At the height of 2006, we employed about 105 people, and now we are down to 39," Cirillo told The Jewish Star.

"We have decided that we are going to lower commission fees by eliminating finance managers," he explained. "This way, the customer can get a good deal and save money, and it will also help

the salespeople earn a living."

According to Steve Kaye of Atlantic Toyota in Amityville, the largest Toyota dealership in New York, the company has cut down car production by a whopping 70 percent.

"I have cars in stock right now," he said, "but I should be out of new cars by June. That is true for all Toyota dealers ... People will have to start buying used cars rather than new ones."

Brandi Begelman, a sales con-
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THE KOSHER BOOKWORM

A post Pesach review and a timely tribute

With the Pesach holiday now in full swing, the classical Jewish "bridge of time," the Omer season, is upon us. Rabbi Paul Steinberg, cited in a previous review, stated it most accurately: "The Jewish calendar is made up of spiritual ebbs and flows, rises and falls. The gradual buildup to Passover climaxes with the seder, undoubtedly one of the high points of the Jewish year. However, Passover should not be experienced as a spiritual island. It is inexorably bound to the next



Alan Jay Gerber

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PESACH Dayenu

BY RABBI AVI BILLET

Everyone knows the song: "Dai dai yaynu, dai dai yay-nu..."

As much as we get into it, what is the meaning of this poem that suggests that had each stage of the exodus journey taken place without leading to its follow-through, it "would have been enough?"

Most simply, there is an implied phrase which is left out — "dayeinu l'hadot" — it would have been enough to cause us to give thanks to G-d.

The first five sentences supply no big ironies. Had G-d taken us out of Egypt — our intended goal — and not punished the Egyptians, or their gods, or their firstborns, or given us their money, that would have been just fine. We wanted freedom, we were freed, and we left to worship G-d in the wilderness.

See DAYENU, Page 2

Different from all other years: Streit's Matzo off preferred list in Five Towns

The decision, the fallout and the regrets over an iconic Passover brand

BY MAYER FERTIG

Every conversation with a kashruth professional about Streit's Matzo — on the record or off — eventually winds up in the same place: no one wants to be disrespectful to the memory of Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik zt"l whose name was on the Streit's box from the mid-50s until his death in 2001 — or to hurt his son, Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik, who gives the hashgacha (kosher certification) today — by publicly raising a concern that the quality of supervision at Streit's has slipped in recent years.

Yet, less than a month before Pesach, the Vaad HaRabbonim of Queens decided to remove Streit's Matzo and matzo products from its list of approved products. The Vaad HaKashrus of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway

immediately followed suit. The result was that days before Passover the makers of Streit's Matzo felt ambushed, Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik was embarrassed publicly and many kosher consumers are confused: is the stuff kosher for Pesach, or not?

Everyone seems to agree that it is.

The directive from the Queens Vaad was in no way meant to imply that the matzo is not kosher for Passover, said Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld, co-president of the Vaad HaRabbonim of Queens. "People asked me, 'I bought Streit's Matzo. Should I return it?' I said no."

"We're not saying, chas v'shalom, that it's not kosher," said Rabbi Yosef Eisen of the Five Towns Vaad. "We're just saying that there are certain concerns about the level of oversight."

"No one here at all had any malice, any intention to hurt anybody," he stressed. "The reason that this has been pushed off from year to year, although there have been certain concerns that this is a private hashgacha, but no one wanted to hurt, at all, Rabbi Soloveichik. [He] is a distinguished individual. In the end not wanting to hurt him, to be damaging to him personally" turned out to have the opposite effect.

"Streit's matzos were held in very high esteem while they were under the hashgacha of Rav Ahron Soloveichik," according to an expert in machine matzo production who spoke to The Jewish Star on the condition that he not be identified. "When the hashgacha went to his son the perception was that the same standards were not maintained."

"Because it was Rav Ahron Soloveichik's hechsher — no one wants to mess with the Soloveichiks in general," he explained. "There's a feeling of reverence [for] the family."

Among the problems that can occur on a matzo production line are the folded over matzo, called a kefulah, or the swelled matzo, called a nefucha, the expert said.

"And part of the job of the hechsher agency is to make sure these are removed prior to crush — the making of all kinds of matzo meal products. Because once it's crushed and turned into itty bitty pieces, you can't tell if it was once kosher matzo or not."

No one who spoke with The Jewish Star offered any cause for specific concern in those regards.

"It's very important that you understand that the question is not whether one trusts the Streit's company," said Rabbi Daniel Senter, the kashrus administrator of the Kof-K. "[They] are very honorable people. The question is ... do they feel comfortable with an individual rabbi supervising something of this scale."

For several years after Rabbi Soloveichik took over the hashgacha from his late father, he shared the responsibility

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That's Life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

Dear That's Life,

Last week, one of my daughters asked me if her room was clean for Pesach. With a tinge of annoyance in my voice, I responded, "Let's see — did you clean your room for Pesach yet?" After hearing that she had not, I gave her the classic 'Mommy stare down' and said, "Well, then I guess it's not clean." She nodded, getting my point, but not before I added, "The elves have off."

The truth is that Pesach is my favorite holiday of the year. It's not the intense cleaning or the seemingly endless spending that does it for me. Rather, it is the eight days immersed in the holiday, surrounded by everything and anything that reminds me of Pesach and tradition that really makes me smile.

I have an aunt in Jerusalem with whom I have always been close and when she gives advice I take it as if it came from Above. So when I was making Pesach for the first time I called her for some words of wisdom. She told me that when I buy dishes I should buy a set completely different from anything I presently owned or anything that is my taste. "When your kids see those dishes or anything like them," she said, "it'll remind them of Pesach."

And that is what I did: buying plates with green and magenta flowers and pretty pink bowls to accompany them. Under all other circumstances, I do not do pink. Yet here I am with these plates that I adore because I see them and they scream "Pesach" — just like the classroom projects we unearth each year and the stained Haggadah I made in kindergarten that always makes me smile.

This holiday, more than others, I feel, is steeped in tradition. From the recipes I make to the tunes we sing at the Seder, everything has a history. A recipe I recently saw for a Mexican

inspired matzo brei with fresh salsa left me completely perplexed. Who thought that was a good idea? What's wrong with the way it has been made for generations? I like reinvention as much as the next cook, but this just isn't right and, it sounds unappetizing. Cilantro, jalapeno and matzo are not a plus.

It reminded me of the Rosh Hashanah when a ba'al tefilah in the shul in which I grew up used some modern Hebrew tunes as his nusach for Mussaf. The rav of the shul then talked about how the tunes that are used for davening have been passed down for generations and should be continued the way they are. It was more than a "it ain't broke, so don't fix it" kind of message — it was more like "this is who we are and who we have been for centuries." To quote Tevye, "It's tradition."

For years I watched as my mother and my aunts made Pesach, washing heads and heads of romaine, boiling more eggs than a single chicken could ever produce and fighting the endless fight against the mess that matzo makes. And now, I've unpacked my dishes and my kids have smiled and I'm ready to make my first brei. Here's wishing all of you all a Chag steeped in tradition and fried in oil.

MLW

P.S. I received a number of e-mails and comments about last week's piece. While I will not disclose in which establishment the incident took place, there are two things I regret about that column: 1. That many people are negatively discussing stores in the area where they think my story could plausibly have taken place and 2. That there are a number of different places where, it seems, these sorts of incidents are happening to other people.

MLW

DAYENU

Continued from Page One

Had G-d split the sea and not guided us through, the sight of the miracle would have been enough for us to give thanks. At the same time, what would have been the point of the sea splitting? Just to wow us and our adversaries who chased us? Clearly the sight of this great miracle did not deter the Egyptians in their zeal to chase after us.

The next intriguing question is on the phrase "Had He brought us to Mt. Sinai and had He not given us the Torah, it would have been enough." It would have been enough to be grateful for getting to this point. But what would be the point of not receiving the Torah once we'd come this far?

Rabbi Moshe Tendler explained that our premise is wrong when we ask this question. When we say "Had G-d brought us to Mt. Sinai" we are saying, as the image of Sinai implies, "Had G-d brought us to Sinai, which means He gave us the Torah" and then "had He not given US the Torah, it would have been enough." The focus is on the word "us" — that G-d gave humans the capacity to study the Torah to its greater depths before rendering judg-

ments and applying interpretations.

Had G-d left the teaching of Torah to Himself and the angels, it would have been good enough. But He engendered within us the ability to take our Torah learning to the next level, which makes it ever so much more of an extraordinary experience and endeavor.

Perhaps we can suggest that a similar sentiment is in play with the arrival at the sea. Splitting the sea suggests G-d invoked all of His wonders to bring about the final departure from Egypt. Did the freed slaves actually need to cross through the walls of water to achieve complete emancipation from Egypt? Who knows?

Many suggest the whole point of having the Egyptians chase the Israelites into the sea was to close one chapter, break the emotional bonds of slavery and the slave mentality, and allow the Israelites to move on. Was it necessary for the Egyptians to die?

"Had G-d split the sea for us" implies we were going through. If not, then it would just say "Had G-d split the sea." As we reread the sentence now, it means "Had G-d split the sea for us — and of course we walked through — but had He not led us through on dry land," in other words, we did not need

an extra miracle. It would have sufficed for the water to be muddy.

We can certainly learn from this song the merits of being thankful for everything we have. But there is an added component to gratitude, and it comes with an appreciation for what it is we've actually received and how we may sometimes lose sight of the greater picture, even when the good things we have are right in front of our eyes.

The last eight months have been a whirlwind for many people. Between the stock market and Ponzi schemes, to an overall bad economy, many people are feeling the pinch and wondering what there is to be grateful for now.

The people in our lives, our families and friends, are the greatest gifts we could hope for. Every minute we have and share with them is fleeting and is enough to be thankful for.

"Had You given us the ability to have positive relationships with all these wonderful people and had You given us absolutely nothing else — Dayenu." It would have been enough — enough to be thankful.

Thank you, G-d.

Avi Billet wishes everyone a chag kasher v'sameach. He welcomes your comments and thoughts at avbillet@gmail.com.

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OPINION

Grandpa's Cadillac drives my freedom

When my grandfather arrived at Ellis Island, Davidovich became Davidson on the spot, Chatche became Harry, and Grandpa became an American. Hearing that a city called Detroit needed workers so badly that they were paying \$5 per day, he traveled to toil at the Ford's factory. At night, he apprenticed for his plumber's license and eventually opened a plumbing supply in Detroit.



Joshua Davidson

nearly extinguished. His leisure and security, and the opportunities we all faced, had been purchased in a society that rewarded hard work and asked little in return: Vote, obey the laws, pay taxes, and above all, prosper and contribute to the common wealth. One way he did the latter was spend his dollars on American products.

That series of entrances finally added up to Grandpa's arrival behind the wheel of his first Cadillac, a used 1928 model, marked down to 1930 prices. He'd earned his citizenship long before, but for him the Cadillac declared him as American — proof of having made something of himself. A Chevrolet would have been a more prudent buy during the Depression, but even then, when it came to buying a car, self-indulgence often overcame sensibility.

Throughout Grandpa's life, it was an easy and smart choice to buy a Cadillac. Today, for me, the decision isn't so clear, with so many good automobiles on the market. Like him, I like to consider myself sensible when it comes to big purchases; also like him, a car means more to me than just transportation. Perhaps more than any other "thing" in my life, my car reflects who I am, or at least how I want to be perceived.

Today, buying a domestic car earns expressions of mild scorn. Why did you buy that instead of a Toyota? A few years ago, there was really no good answer to that; the quality of domestic cars was so poor, that the only reason was that you couldn't pass up the incredible deal. But in the last few years, the domestics have pulled virtually even with the imports in terms of quality, performance and economy. And yet, now a majority of car sales go to foreign brands, mainly because they are perceived as "cooler" than the domestics: tougher, sexier, smarter, greener, richer, younger, safer — in some way they make buyers feel acceptable in their peer group.

People have a right to buy a car that makes them feel good about themselves; Grandpa did. Today, we can each find a car to express that we are sexytoughsmartbetter, or some other projection of self. But do these common desires align with the uncommon responsibilities we hold as Jews? To improve the world, to support Israel, and during Passover, to acknowledge the freedom our ancestors gained for us.

Back when I was in charge of the Four Questions, Grandpa would make an extra show of reclining in his chair. The symbolic gesture of escaping Pharaoh's tyranny was his Haggadah assignment, but it also expressed his own liberty from the eternal anxiety of Jewish life in his Ukrainian homeland — which had, 20 years before I was born, been

Grandpa knew that what he bought at times had ethical consequences beyond the math. Just as our occasional voting responsibility aggregates our political sentiments to confer great power, so do our daily purchases funnel our wealth through the selected enterprise to the national economy in which that company operates. Even through the blurring lens of globalism, it is clear that while localized manufacturing wages and taxes sustain communities, it profits the manufacturing company, and solidifies the economic power of the home nation. Simply put, the purchase of an American-made Toyota may employ some American workers, but it enriches Toyota shareholders and strengthens Japan's economy — not America's.

This ought to be an important distinction to Jews. No matter your political leanings, it's hard to argue that in all of history, America alone has guaranteed her Jewish citizens the equality, security and sanctity that we have ever sought since the Egyptian Exodus. In our own time, America has been the single unflinching friend of Israel. With a hollowed-out industrial sector, can the U.S. project real strength in the Persian Gulf? When it comes to the quick, will Asia or Europe stand behind Israel?

Today, with Israel at increasing risk, and with the U.S. weakened, Jews must consider whether there are deeper sentiments than how we want to feel about ourselves, and that we are obliged to be more than just frugal with our dollars.

This year, for the first time, I'll be the one reclining at the head of the table. I've never known real fear, poverty, or hatred — only that those things are flourishing in many countries that Grandpa chose not to go to, and that a strong United States — productive, unified, industrially sound — is the only assurance I can give that my own children's children will be reclining in their time.

Joshua Davidson is a publisher and marketing consultant in Boston, Massachusetts. He has been involved in the automobile industry as everything from a local mechanic to executive speech writer at General Motors. Currently, he is publishing the exclusive audiobook edition of Alfred Sloan's "My Years with General Motors." His father was born in Detroit.

AUTO INDUSTRY

Continued from Page One

sultant for IDeal Auto Lease and Sales in Woodmere, has been working in the industry for close to 40 years and has witnessed firsthand how the economy is taking a toll on her clients and affecting their buying power.

"There is no question that business is down," she acknowledged. "I see more and more people looking to extend their lease or purchasing warranties to cover their extensions. Customers are calling me up and asking me why prices aren't cheaper. People are downsizing from their luxury cars because they are afraid to spend money right now."

In Valley Stream, South Shore Honda also reported a decline in their overall business.

"Business has decreased, but not as much as in other places, and we are doing OK," observed sales manager Oscar Melara.

When asked why that was so, Melara replied, without missing a beat, "Because we're selling Hondas, and they're the best."

He did note that although the size of his customer base has remained intact, more of his patrons are choosing to lease cars, rather than buy them. Popular models include Civics and Acuras, since they are "smaller and good with gas," Melara said.

"Honda is offering phenomenal deals this month," Begelman confirmed. "Eighty percent of my business is Honda. March was a great month to buy any Pilots that were left because they've stopped production of them. There were also great deals on Odysseys. Anyone who made a Honda purchase or leased last month couldn't get hurt."

A gentleman from the Five Towns recently replaced his luxury car and opted for a smaller, more cost-effective model, which he purchased through a 60-month financial loan agreement.

"I went from an Acura MDX to a Honda Pilot," said the man, who spoke to The Jewish Star on condition of anonymity. "I was looking for a car in a certain price range, and even though the MDX was a higher end vehicle, the Honda was actually roomier and bigger and it was cheaper. It drives nicely."

Auto dealers feel that the credit crunch is largely to blame for slumping sales.

"Banks are not approving customers they way they used

to," explained Toyota's Cirillo. "It used to be that even people with low income or credit were able to get older, used cars. Now, even people with high credit scores are being turned down for loans and that is very scary."

"I am getting smaller payments because credit has been a big issue," said Sol Hershkop, the owner of Wheels to Lease in Brooklyn.

His customers are also trying to cut costs in other ways. "People have been downsizing from three cars to two, or from two to one," he said.

Begelman's customers have been downsizing as well, and "that's where my customer base is hurting the most," she said. But for her clients, a more significant challenge has been the rising rate of residuals, prompting many to buy rather than lease.

"People getting approved [by banks] is becoming more difficult," she observed. "The difference between tier one and tier four could cause someone to pay in excess of more than \$100 a month ... If people can live with their car for more than three years, they are looking to buy, especially in the foreign market."

Though there are tax incentives available for leasing American-made cars, "residuals upset the payment," Begelman said, noting that "when you trade in your car, you are going to lose money because the car is valued at less and you are not going to cover the loss ... If there is a good buy program, I tell my customers to buy."

Hershkop acknowledged that although the economy is affecting his business, he believes that better times lie ahead.

"The last few months have generally been rough for everyone, but since March, it's been picking up and it's been good for the last month," he said, explaining that the spring is generally a busy season for the auto industry. "The geulah (redemption) is finally here."

Although business is not yet back to its optimum level, the reality is that "people still need to drive, and their leases are up," Hershkop pointed out. Though he has retained many of his customers, they have been spending less and favoring classic brands such as Honda and Toyota, the only two companies that

don't charge disposition fees.

Based on her recent sales, Begelman disagreed with Hershkop's assessment of the industry's improvement.

"I think March was the best month since all this happened, but it has nothing to do with the market being better," she maintained. "It is just a coincidence — people's leases are up and they are out of extensions. The sales only lasted for a few weeks and now it's quiet again."

However, just this past week, Cirillo saw a slight increase in his business and experienced a bit of turnaround in sales, which he attributes to the spring weather.

"Usually spring is our thrust period, starting now," he said. "We are optimistic that the banks will start lending again."

In response to the current situation, Victory Toyota of the Five Towns has reduced the amount of SUVs and larger vehicles which they used to carry in bulk, and are stocking more Camrys, "always a good seller," Cirillo said. "For a while, people

were buying more hybrids because of the gas crunch and now they seem to be buying smaller models."

"By dealers taking less allocation [orders] from factories, that's how they are going to hold their own," Begelman added. "By producing less cars, it becomes not a buyer's market but a seller's market."

In an effort to boost business, dealerships have been offering sales.

"A manufacturer will give us rebates and we have been doubling or tripling them," said Cirillo.

South Shore Honda also provides rebates, "as well as low financing agreements," said Melara. "We have seen a pickup recently and we hope it continues."

"Of course we are offering deals," confirmed Hershkop, though he declined to provide specifics. "We have been giving our own 'stimulus packages,' let's call it ... I hope the trend will keep picking up."

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Physics, not rocket science

Editorial

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. So says Newton's third law of motion, axiomatic to our understanding of the physical world. Unfortunately, our understanding of the physical world and of reality doesn't always seem to accurately translate the perceptions and public statements of Israel's most implacable enemies and her harshest critics — fellow Jews often among them. Instead, the goings on in the arenas of left-wing activism and public relations all too often seem to bear no link at all to realities that most of us see plainly before our eyes.

With that in mind, these items are notable for their seeming fidelity to Newton's third law.

First, a boycott of Israeli wines staged in Vancouver, British Columbia by a group called Not In Our Name: Jewish Voices Opposing Zionism, didn't work out exactly as planned.

According to the Canadian Jewish News the idea was to stage a protest dubbed "Apartheid is Not Kosher," at liquor stores offering Israeli wines, and "distribute information about the Palestinian cause and 'Israeli apartheid.'"

They asked that Jews buying kosher for Passover wine 'make [their] Passover apartheid-free' by boycotting Israeli wine brands."

They must have not known that many Israeli wines are really good. And they must have not known that many, if not most, Jews are well aware that comparisons between Israel and the South African apartheid state of the 80's are specious and nonsensical.

Hundreds of counter-protesters showed up and, guess what? They cleaned out the supply of Israeli vintages in several shops targeted by protesters, purchasing several thousand bottles.

L'Chaim!

The second example of Newton's third law concerns fallout from a very public temper tantrum by Turkey's prime minister back in February. Tayyip Erdogan stormed off a stage he was sharing with Israeli President Shimon Peres at the Davos World Economic Conference after arguing with Peres about Israel's operation in Gaza. At one point he yelled, "You are killing people."

As prime minister he might not have known the specifics of Turkey's tourist trade with Israel. We do, however. Last year it amounted to \$300 million — 13 percent of all departures by Israeli tourists were to Turkey, making it Israel's second most popular tourist destination.

Turkish tour operators are going to be way off their numbers this year, according to Ha'aretz. That's the opposite of increasing tourism from Israel by 25 percent in 2009 as they had hoped.

Tour operators report massive cancellations of vacations planned for spring and summer — one company reports sales down by half. Many Israelis are going to Greece and Cyprus instead.

It would be nice to see this last and even translate to a drop in travel to other countries that aren't evenhanded with Israel, but that's probably not too likely.

The head of Israel's Tourist and Travel Agents Association, Yossi Fattal, told Ha'aretz he doesn't think the boycott will prove to be such a big deal in the end: "The Israeli memory isn't very long," he said. "Half a year is like an ice age and the memory will fade."

Still, doing something is almost always better than doing nothing at all.

Letters

Preserving a good name

To The Editor:

I read Miriam Wallach's That's Life column in the April 3 issue of the Jewish press with mounting trepidation. "Oh, no, not again," I thought as the story about an obnoxious shopkeeper unraveled. And then, with a sense of relief I realized, "Wow, this isn't about Toddy's!"

I read to the end expecting to see some kind of disclaimer to that point, but there was nothing. What's that about? Surely, Mr. Editor, you had to realize that when you use terms like "luxury items" and "infuriating a customer" in the same paragraph, Toddy's will naturally be the first store people think of.

The thing is that I'm really

not sure what upset me more — the fact that you didn't think to clear Toddy's good name with a note after the article or that someone is trying to take over my spot as most obnoxious shopkeeper. I've worked long and hard cultivating my street cred and I'm not going to just sit back and let some Yoni-cum-lately knock me off with something as lame as "that's the way it is." That's not even funny!

I'm sure some of your brighter readers saw the clues that would disqualify Toddy's as the culprit in this little opera. First, if we charged \$12 for every mistake we corrected, I'd be retired on a beach on Maui right now. Second, everyone knows that 40 minutes means at least an hour in Jewish time, so a customer of mine has nothing to gain by being prompt. And, third, we don't really do Shab-

bos gifts; although, do not underestimate the thrill the hostess will get when you hand her a big bottle of Toddy's Balsamic Dressing.

I certainly understand the shopper's frustration, especially with the whole delivery thing. Just a couple of weeks ago a woman came back to pick up a pound of tuna salad (luxury item) that we had left out. I told her that if she called we would have delivered it.

"Really?!" She asked.

"Well, sure, now that you're here, we would have delivered it."

See, that's funny.

JAY TODTMAN
Toddy's Appetizers

Real semicha

To The Editor:

While your article concerning the Yeshiva Pirchei Shoshanim's Shulchan Aruch Learning Project was by and large accurately reported, the headline of the article was unfortunate and demeans the program and its participants.

Entitling the article "Ordained Online: Learning for Semicha the High Tech Way," (April 3, 2009) might lead the uninformed to believe that the Semicha conferred by Pirchei Shoshanim is somehow not a "real" Semicha and that it is similar to internet ordination of clergy via less than valid means. The only "high tech" method

employed in the program, is the use of e-mail to deliver the shiurim and to communicate with the Maggidai Shiur. This is eminently practical, since the time difference between the U.S. and Israel can sometimes make phone communication difficult.

As a long-time participant in the program, I can assure you that the quality of the shiurim is of the highest caliber and the

relationship that develops between the Maggidai Shiur and the students is strong, real and of lasting duration.

I encourage others interested in the program to contact Rabbi David Engel at Engel@shemay-israel.com.

YOSSI DANZGER
Woodmere

ABOUT LETTERS

The Jewish Star welcomes Letters to the Editor of no more than 250 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for style, content and space. Deadline is Monday at noon; we cannot guarantee placement. Letters must include the name of the writer, current address and daytime

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FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH

Power of belief

I'm standing in line in my third favorite supermarket and a fellow approaches me. "I read your article about the 'fifth son' — you know the one who was absent from the Seder? Well, that's not the problem my wife and I have. You see all of our kids are at the Seder but we only get nachas from one of them."



David Seidemann

He continues to tell me that his children mirror the ones described in the Haggadah. "One is just plain outright bad. The others, one is an under achiever and the other is just clueless." Those were his words; I am not paraphrasing.

"We tried everything," he says to me. "I got one of them a tutor and the other a therapist. My wife and I just give up. We are resigned to the fact that we have our one genius and the others — oh well,

what can you do?"

So you've given up? I asked. "Yep," he answers.

"I'm no expert but that might be part of the problem. If you've given up, your children sense that and they've given up. If you've branded one child as evil and another dumb, they know that and they have branded themselves as evil or dumb."

I told him that perhaps one tutor and one try at therapy was insufficient. I asked to see a picture of his kids and he produced a wallet size photo. He pointed to one child and said, "the fat one, that's the dumb one." Again, those were his actual, painful words. Now I was convinced as to the source of the problem, and it was not his children.

"I notice your other children are thin,

were they always thin?"

"No," he said, "they've lost weight." "You mean they changed?" I asked.

"Yep," he answered.

"So a child can be overweight at one time, lose weight, perhaps gain weight again and still be the same child, right?" I asked. "I guess so," he replied.

I walked him to his car and left him with two parting thoughts. Firstly, I suggested that not only should his children be involved in therapy, but that he should consider it for himself as well.

Secondly, I told him that perhaps he should view his "four sons" as follows. Instead of viewing one as a sage, the other as evil, the other as an under achiever and the other as just plain dumb, view each son as containing all four parts, but perhaps just stuck in one particular phase, like an overweight child who needs a diet. I assured him that if he would view each of his "disappointments" as potential nachas givers and convey that sentiment to them, that he would see immediate changes, a sense of redemption.

Ten plagues lasting months; seven

days before the red sea split; 40 days before the Torah could be given; and 40 years wandering in the desert before the Children of Israel could enter the land of Israel — all because it was a process that had to unfold. All because a diet was necessary; all because each person had to change from displaying one of their less than flattering aspects to an aspect that shone, that radiated brilliance.

And since those glory days, undoubtedly we've slipped back to displaying other less flattering attributes. We reverted to one of the other "underachieving" sons. But it does not matter, because the all-knowing wise parent knows that we are a composite of many attributes and that His belief in us is not disturbed.

And because He believes in us, we believe in Him. But more importantly, because he believes in us, we believe in ourselves. You want a child to believe in himself, let him know that you believe in him. Lose the label and you'll gain a child, and not just any child, but a child that will give you nachas.

That I believe is one of many pro-

found lessons of Passover. We were a nation of idol worshipping slaves and yet G-d saw within us the potential to be a nation of supreme intellect and faith. We were underachievers who professed the ability to become wise and wise we become.

"Vaya'aminu BaHashem Uv'Moshe Avdo" — and they, the children of Israel believed in G-d and in Moses his servant. That belief in G-d and in Moses could never have manifested had G-d and Moses not believed in the Children of Israel and had the Children of Israel not believed in themselves.

As we sit around the Seder table in a few hours, together with our families, let us derive nachas from all of them. Those whose potential has been exposed and those who are but moments away from bursting forth. Chances are that all they need is a little more "belief" on our part.

David Seidemann is a partner with the law firm of Seidemann & Mermelstein. He can be reached at (718) 692-1013 and at ds@lawofficesm.com.

IN MY VIEW

Continued from Page One

I want to share with you what I told the team in our post-game locker room meeting last night.

I told them that I am extremely proud of what they accomplished this season. They played through tremendous adversity throughout the season. Many in the league felt the championship would come down to Ramaz, Flatbush or Heschel. Nobody really gave HANC a chance, but nobody on HANC said a word. We just played. We played through injuries, lineup changes, defensive adjustments and more injuries. Finally, we got it all together at the right time. That takes major character. For our seniors to lead us as they did, and for our juniors to step up as they did is extremely special.

However, I told the guys that they need to remember that at HANC we are a family. Their success is also a credit to the hard work that the teams before them put in. The seeds were planted two and three years ago with the dedication of players on those teams. The team last year took us to levels HANC has never before reached. This year's team put the finishing touches on turning our program into a winner. We were lucky enough to have

players in the locker room last night from all four of those teams celebrating together what each one of them helped to build over the last few years.

It was great to see the support from former players and players' parents throughout the season. What a tremendous feeling it is to be part of such a close-knit school. I am not sure that people even realize how amazing it is for the players from previous years to be sending e-mail and text messages to the team before each game. In most schools those kids could not care less once they graduate. Things are just different at HANC.

This year's team did not start out with the same natural chemistry that last year's team possessed, but they certainly finished with it. That is a testament to what these players have inside, and a strong testament to one player who I want to mention in specific — Seth Hochhauser — who will graduate this year. Seth was an outstanding player, but it wasn't his ability on the court or his stats that were special. It was his leadership and commitment. Over the two years that he played varsity, and the four years he played in the school, he was a leader and a winner. It was special for me to see him and his group of fellow seniors walk out the door with that trophy that they earned with many years of dedication, class and hard work.

Finally, I want to finish with a copy of my closing paragraph from last year's letter, with no changes except for the ages of my kids, because it still rings as true now as it did then:

To me, that is what I am most proud of with this group — the way they stuck together and handled themselves game in and game out. It's easy to get along when you win. It's also easy to be looked at as over-confident and classless. I can confidently say that this team knows how to handle winning and losing at every level with class and respect. That is a clear representation of the way they have been brought up by their parents and their school and I thank all of you for allowing me to take part in that.

My sons, Jacob, five, and Noah, three, come to a lot of the games. To see how our players conduct themselves on and off the court is a tremendous example for them. They spend many nights in our basement playing basketball and pretending to be one of the HANC players. When the guys are over at our house they take the time to talk and play with them and it makes them feel great. In a school where in four years I have heard nothing but positive comments and support from both the parents and administration, I can't say it surprises me, but it certainly makes me proud to be a part of the HANC family.

HAFTR's big winners

BY YAFFI SPODEK

HAFTR senior Jaclyn Yael Schein recently won first place at the New York State Science and Engineering Fair. As an Intel International Science and Engineering Fair Finalist, she will travel to Reno, Nevada from May 10-16 to compete in a week-long international science competition.

Schein, 17, of Woodmere, aspires to pursue a career in scientific research. In the fall, she will attend MIT, where she plans to study materials science and biological engineering.

Her winning project, which she worked on at SUNY Stony Brook, examined ways to blend different types of plastics together. "My project examined the physical properties of novel polymer blends," Schein explained to The Jewish Star. "Different types of polymers need to be recycled separately because they do not blend well, which significantly adds to the cost of recycling. In this project, I used a co-solvent called supercritical carbon dioxide to develop a method of blending different polymers, potentially reducing the need to separate plastics for recycling. These novel polymer blends could have a range of practical applications, from



Jaclyn Yael Schein

LCD screens to medical devices."

Schein worked under the guidance of Dr. Miriam Rafailovich and Rebecca Isseroff, and plans to continue the project this summer at Stony Brook.

Another HAFTR senior, Rachel Bandler, won Honorable Mention in Behavioral Science and the American Psychology Society Award for her project that examined the applicability of Markov mathematical chains in predicting human behavioral choices.

The Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (Intel ISEF) is the world's largest international pre-college science competition in which more than 1,500 high school students showcase their independent research to compete for nearly \$4 million in prizes and scholarships.

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ON THE Calendar

For a complete listing of upcoming community events, including items that didn't make it into the print edition, go to www.thejewishstar.com.

Manhattan - The Yeshiva University Museum is hosting a special event on Sunday, April 12, Chol Hamoed Pesach. "Spiritual Liberation: How The Zohar Reimagines God" will feature Kabbalah scholar Daniel Matt discussing the Zohar. His talk will be presented in conjunction with "I of the Storm," a new collection of paintings by neo-expressionist Michael Hafftkin, who will be there as well. In honor of the holiday, admission will be free all day. Museum hours are 11:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is located at 15 W. 16th St. between 5th and 6th Avenues in Manhattan. For more

information, please call (212) 294 8330 or visit www.yumuseum.org.

West Hempstead - Hebrew Academy of Nassau County is sponsoring two Chol Hamoed events open to children from all schools. On Monday, April 13, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., they will hold their annual baseball clinic at Echo Park by George Digiovanni (WH PAL Commissioner). The program is limited to the first 30 boys who sign up, in grades 5-9. The cost is \$36 for the day, which includes drinks and a day of instruction. On Tuesday, April 14, will be the annual laser tag event at Q-ZAR in Carle Place. The price of \$18 includes drinks, 2 games of laser tag and unlimited video games for girls and boys grades 3-8. For more information and to reserve a spot, please call Betty at (516) 565-

0189 or e-mail mbnra@aol.com.

Cedarhurst - Chabad is hosting the Meal of Mashiach on Thursday, April 16 at 6:30 p.m., marking the Baal Shem Tov's tradition of acknowledging Mashiach's spirit on the last day of Passover. Join us for inspirational stories, songs, matzah & wine led by Rabbi Heshy Epstein, Executive Director of Chabad of South Carolina. The meal will take place at Chabad, 74 Maple Ave in Cedarhurst. To RSVP, call (516) 295-2478.

Lynbrook - Congregation Beth David of Lynbrook is having an indoor garage sale on Sunday April 19 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at 188 Vincent Ave. Buy a table for only \$35. For more information, call Helene at (516) 599-2570.

Cedarhurst - Chabad is hosting Youth Zone III on Sunday, April 19 from 10:00 to 12 noon. Youth Zone is a fun filled program, for children ages three to six, that promotes Jewish values and friendship

through games and crafts. It will be held at Chabad, 74 Maple Avenue in Cedarhurst. Registration is required. For more information, please call (516) 295-2478.

Hewlett - The Hewlett House, a free, non-profit community resource center for cancer patients, is hosting Wig Day on Sunday, April 19 from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. at 86 East Rockaway Road in Hewlett. Professional hair stylists and beauticians are volunteering their expertise to select the perfect wig and hair style for any woman who needs one due to hair loss from cancer. Mini-facials will also be given. Refreshments will be provided by South Nassau's Cancer Center. Cancer patients, their families and friends are invited to attend. All services as well as wigs are free. For more information, please contact Hewlett House at (516) 374-3190.

Oceanside - The Friedberg JCC will host a Yom Hashoah commemoration on Sunday, April 19 from 7:00 to 8:45 p.m. All are invited to view an

art exhibit and hear Hy Horowitz, who will share his memories of liberating a camp as a GI in the U.S. Army. This program is made possible by the hard work of JECOCO's Yom Hashoah Committee, made up of synagogue representatives, survivors, and community organizations. The JCC is located at 15 Neil Court. For more information, please contact Joan Goldfaden at (516)766-4341, ext. 128 or jgoldfaden@friedbergjcc.org.

Lawrence - Congregation Beth Shalom is hosting a Yom Hashoah commemoration for the community on Monday, April 20 at 7:45 p.m. at 390 Broadway (at Washington Avenue). The keynote speaker will be Professor Nechama Tec, author of "Defiance." The program will feature a survivor video testimony, third generation awareness presentation and a musical performance by Baruch Abittan.

Oceanside - The Young Israel of Oceanside is hosting a Yom Hashoah Program on Tuesday, April 21 at 7:30 p.m. The program will feature a guest speaker, Holocaust Survivor Sally Weiner, with participation by community youth. The Young Israel is located at 150 Waukena Ave. For more information, please call Miriam Baum-Benkoe at (516) 678-1585.

Great Neck - Temple Israel of Great Neck is hosting an exhibition on Oskar Schindler, the German-Catholic industrialist who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. The exhibit can be viewed at 108 Old Mill Rd in Great Neck through May 3. For more information, please call (516) 482-4399.

Oceanside - The Friedberg JCC, is hosting its 1st Annual "Try"athon on Sunday April 26 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Distance in 20 minute intervals

will be measured in running, biking, and swimming events. All activities take place at Friedberg JCC Health, Fitness and Aquatics Center, 15 Neil Court in Oceanside. Prizes will be awarded to winners. Light refreshments and T-shirt will be provided. The cost is \$20 and proceeds will benefit Friedberg JCC and Sunrise Day Camp. Space is limited, so advance registration is suggested. For more information, please call (516) 766-4341, ext. 130 or e-mail Aschiller@friedbergjcc.org.

Oceanside - The Friedberg JCC is hosting a free HBO documentary series on Alzheimer's. "The Memory Loss Tapes" will be shown on Wednesday, April 29 from 7:30-9:30 p.m. This documentary takes an intimate look into the lives of seven individuals living with Alzheimer's, each in an advanced state of dementia across the full spectrum of the progression of the disease. The second documentary, "Caregivers," will be shown on Wednesday, May 6, from 8 to 9:30 p.m. This documentary is seen through the lens of five individuals caring for family members suffering from the disease, conveying the sacrifices and success of people who experience their loved ones' gradual descent into dementia. Both films will be followed by light refreshments and a question and answer session. The JCC is located at 15 Neil Court in Oceanside. For more information, please call (516) 766-4341 ext. 131 or e-mail: rbruckenstein@friedbergjcc.org.

Oceanside - South Nassau Community Hospital is offering Free Head & Neck Cancer Screenings on Friday, May 1 from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. in the hospital's Conference Center A & B. South Nassau is located at One Healthy Way in Oceanside. For more information or to register, please call (516) 632-3350.

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Employed, but need help? Unemployed, and wondering where to turn for help? Wonder no more! The Orthodox Union Job Board, along with several other communal organizations, is hosting a Jewish Community Services Expo on Sunday, April 26, that will answer all of your questions. Whether you are gainfully employed but still need help in areas out of your control, or are unemployed and want to learn how to navigate the system, this expo is for you.

The expo will begin at 12 noon and continue until 4:00 p.m., and will be held at Landers College for Women, 225 West 60th St. in Manhattan.

Come learn about free services that are available in your community that can help those you know. See how knowledge of what is available can help save you from pending financial stress. Learn available options from professional Jewish service organizations, chesed groups and government offices.

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KOSHER BOOKWORM: A POST PESACH REVIEW

Continued from Page One

major festival Shavuot, by seven weeks; and within those weeks are the connecting days that possess their own inherent significance" (Celebrating the Jewish Year, The Jewish Publications Society, 2009).

This segment of time is called Sefirat Ha'Omer and serves as a time link between the two major religious feasts that are framed by the Exodus experience and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

The counting, which begins on the second night of Pesach, forces us to look ahead, to the Sefirah period, to Yom Hashoah, to Yom Ha'atzmaut, to Lag Ba'Omer, to Yom Yerushalayim and ultimately to Shavuot itself. It is a forward moving counting exercise that forces one to view the calendar as if it was a liturgical work itself that assists in the propelling of time.

There are several books that I wish to bring to your attention that should help give you an intellectual and emotional insight into the deeper meanings of these times.

The first is entitled "Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Pesach, Sefirat ha-Omer and Shavu'ot," edited by Rabbi David Shapiro and published by Urim Publications.

According to the editor, each chapter of this book deals with an area of halachic learning in which the Rav made a significant contribution to our understanding of that particular sugya. These chiddushim are presented in a clear English, although the Gemara citations are, for the most part, not translated.

Also, each theme is explored and explained in a manner that demonstrates its relevance beyond its original immediate context, thus giving it a broader meaning and application to Jewish law and observance.

The range of topics starts with an analysis of the relationship between the importance of the Exodus experience as detailed in our daily liturgical regimen to that as practiced at the seder on Pesach. Also, the unique recitation of the Hallel service is analyzed for the inner meanings of its being recited twice during the first two evenings of the holiday.

The whole concept concerning the importance of kavana (deep concentration and devotion) while doing a mitzvah is given extensive treatment. This spiritual mental exercise is placed in its proper perspective and should serve as an apt musar shmooze for all of us.

This is followed by an analysis of the quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of the numerous laws concerning Sefirat Ha'Omer.

One fascinating chapter deals with the historical dispute in the proper dating of Shavuot between the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Boethusians, a dispute whose ultimate resolution was to settle all major disputes in Jewish law in favor of the Pharisees.

The last two chapters deal with the 10 commandments, specifically the first through the fourth, and the Rav's take on

the textual analysis, as well as the theological importance that is behind the centrality of these mitzvot to our faith.

A common theme that flows through this volume is the contrast between the spiritual and physical darkness as represented by the Egyptian servitude and the spiritual light as demonstrated at Mt. Sinai.

Rabbi Shlomo Aviner is one of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook, zt"l's leading disciples and one of Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, zt"l's leading ideological advocates today. His outspoken demeanor is reflected in an interesting sefer entitled, "Moadim Lesimcha: Explorations into the Jewish Holidays" (Urim Publications, 2002).

Relevant to this review are the chapters that deal with Rav Aviner's take on such timely issues as the Aish Kodesh's views and teachings concerning the Holocaust and of Rav Aviner's own personal quest as to where G-d was during the Holocaust.

Rav Aviner's treatment of Pesach focuses attention on his commentary on the ma'aseh b'Rabbi Eliezer, the 10 plagues and their theological and historical significance.

The splitting of the sea and its importance to us today, especially when we consider that it is commemorated in our liturgy every day of the year, is dealt with by citing the opinions of Rav Zadok HaKohen of Lublin's teachings on this sacred event.

Yom Ha'atzmaut, Lag Ba'Omer and Yom Yerushalayim are each given separate treatment, with a chapter detailing the deep contemporary spiritual importance that they have come to signify to the Jewish people. Discussed therein are the concepts of redemption, the birth pangs of the mashiah and the mitzvah of yishuv and kedushat Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Aviner notes that Jerusalem is not mentioned once in the Torah, and he uses this as his take off point for an interesting and intriguing Yom Yerushalayim drasha.

Shavuot is dealt with in traditional fashion, with an Aviner touch of his own take on revelation, prophecy and whether the giving of the Torah was a fully voluntary experience. All this truly makes for some very interesting Sefira reading.

A timely tribute
This past Friday marked the 40th yahrtzeit of one of our nation's most beloved rabbonim, HaRav Aryeh Levin, zt"l. Surely, this writer would be remiss if he did not devote space to the life's work of this spiritual angel who graced the holy city of Jerusalem with his "bren for

chain and ahavat Yisrael" at a time when it needed it the most.

Recently, in anticipation of this commemorative, Feldheim Publishers re-issued one of their greatest biographical classics, "A Tzaddik in our Time" by one of Israel's greatest writers, Simcha Raz.

Originally published in Hebrew in 1972, it was published in English in 1976 by Rabbi Isaiah Dvorkas and translated by Charles Wengrov. A new, revised and expanded edition was recently published, edited by Deena Nataf with the assistance of Rabbi Binyamin Levene.

It is truly a joy to behold the respect and veneration that the public had and still has for Rav Levin inasmuch as all editions of Simcha Raz's book have been runaway bestsellers.

Any attempt by me to summarize Rav Levin's life story would be inadequate. My only effort here will be to focus on my own personal tribute to the man who has come to represent the best that the Israel rabbinate has ever offered in service to all Klal Yisrael through his deed and by his example.

In his forward to the second English edition, Rav Levin's grandson, Rabbi Levene states that in observing his grandfather he came to learn the following:

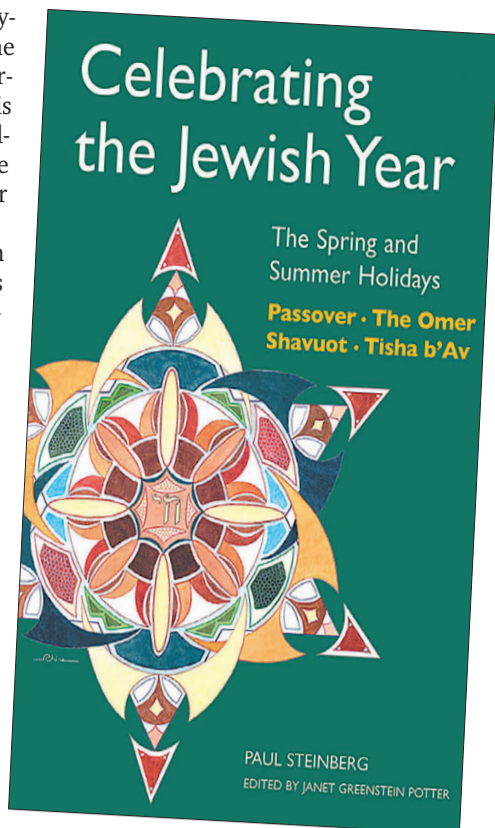
"Simple can be deep and profound.

Extremism is not an expression of holiness.

You can serve G-d and be 'normal.'"

Given all the contention and strife within our people today, we all have much to learn from the legacy of one who passed from our midst four decades ago at this season but whose legacy and spiritual yerusha we can all learn from during this Pesach and Sefira Zeman. "A Tzaddik in our Time" deserves your undivided attention.

Yom Hashoah tribute
The next Bookworm will, iy"v pay tribute to a true Holocaust hero, Rav Joseph Tzvi Carlebach, hy"v (The Ish Yehudi), the last Chief Rabbi of Hamburg, the diary of Moshe Malz, and a special review of "Princes Among Men."



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Continued from Page One

with the Kof-K, a nationally recognized kosher supervision agency. The relationship ended amicably, according to both parties, after the company made a business decision to have just one hashgacha. For the past three years Rabbi Soloveichik has worked alone, with a team of five mashgichim (kosher supervisors).

For more than two years, it seems, either nobody noticed or they pretended to not notice.

"The Five Towns — although the entire kashrus industry was aware of the issue — we never delved into it," Rabbi Eisen said, "and we allowed the product on the shelves all these years."

"You're asking why it took this long, perhaps that's a valid question," admitted Rabbi Schonfeld. "It's possible that it was sort of swimming along, riding the crest of the Kof-K hashgacha."

Would it be fair then for consumers to wonder about the level of supervision by the Queens Vaad, Rabbi Schonfeld was asked, given an apparent failure to note what turned out to be a significant change?

"You might be right," Rabbi Schonfeld said, but the issue "arose when the matzos began to arrive and we felt that we just had to really think about this hard and we just felt that we weren't comfort-

able accepting this matzo ... If it was on borscht it's one thing, but we're talking about matzos."

The problem with Streit's lack of a national hashgacha is that "we don't know enough about Rav Moshe Soloveichik," Rabbi Schonfeld claimed. "He just doesn't swim in the kashrus world ... we're not saying he's bad; not at all. We just don't know."

"If this was a serious concern you don't wait until four weeks before Passover to raise it," retorted Alan Adler, the director of operations of Aron Streit, Inc. He's a great-grandson of the company's founder and one of three cousins who presently runs the business.

He invited the Queens and Five Towns vaads to inspect the plant, he said, but neither did so.

"We took a heck of a risk opening our doors to the local vaads. Anyone could come down and find a piece of dirt on the floor or something else they don't like. They could have hurt our business. But we have enough confidence in what we do and in the Soloveichik supervision that we would take that risk," Adler said.

The first hint that this year wouldn't be like all other years came about a month ago when a kosher market in Queens called Adler to say the Vaad's mashgiach would not allow him to take delivery of Streit's Matzo. Adler called the Queens Vaad and said he was told that the lack of national hashgacha was going to be a problem.

"Rabbi Soloveichik always

says if someone is acting in good faith and wants to examine our facility they'll do it in the fall. They don't wait" until right before the holiday.

"That's an ambush," Adler said.

"If something happened, if you became aware of a treif ingredient, of course you have to act," said Rabbi Soloveichik in an interview. "But to change a policy immediately before Pesach shows a lack of concern for other people. People were stuck with orders, with returns."

"More than that, a person has to assume responsibility for not only what they say, but for the impression that they create. And when you do it at the last moment, the impression that one creates is that there was a question of chameitz, a question of a treif ingredient, especially when this product was accepted up until this moment, every previous year," he said.

"We regret if we caused any loss to anybody," Rabbi Schonfeld said. The Queens Vaad had viewed its decision as "limited" and "parochial" but watched it take on unexpected weight, he explained. "It snowballed and people all over the country seemed to be riding the train. That was not our intention."

The Five Towns Vaad and the one in Queens tend to mirror each other and act in concert, Rabbi Eisen said, due to proximity and similarities between constituencies.

Not everyone agrees the concerns about Streit's warranted urgent action. One Five Towns vaad told The Jewish Star that he is "very upset" about how the matter was handled; another pointed out that a private warning in time to act before Pesach would have been more appropriate.

A number of rabbis pointedly announced there is no reason to avoid Streit's Matzo this Pesach.

In Oceanside, Rabbi Jonathan Muskat first warned that due to "the great halakhic stakes involved" it would be better to buy matzo with a reputable national hashgacha. In a follow-up to members of his Young Israel he wrote that he had confirmed that members of the nationally-recognized Chicago Rabbinical Council (CRC) had "personally inspected" the Streit's plant and "were satisfied that, for this year, their products met their kashrut standards," and would be allowed in CRC-supervised stores. "Since I became aware of this new information, I believe that one may rely on the CRC's stamp of approval and purchase Streit's products for Pesach this year," Rabbi Muskat wrote.

When the Kof-K began supervising the plant, "Streit's spent thousands upon thousands of dollars making upgrades to accommodate the Kof-K," said Rabbi Senter. The changes were part of an updated system of supervision he devised for the plant.

The fact that changes had been required was not particularly significant, he cautioned.

"I've never been to a matzo factory, regardless of who certifies it — and I've been to many — that there haven't been changes that I would have wanted to make if I were to certify it. I would accept it the way it was but if you want it under my certification there are changes and systems that I would require."

He has been inside the Streit's plant in Lower Manhattan within the last month and said "to my knowledge" the system he instituted is still there.

The other critical component of kashrus is the quality of the supervision itself, Rabbi Senter explained. That he could not speak to, although he has fielded calls from many local kashruth organizations seeking insight into the situation at Streit's.

"The Kof-K does not give direction to vaads and does not tell them what they should or shouldn't do, nor does the Kof-K comment to the public on whether a specific certification is acceptable or not," said Rabbi Senter, adding, "I don't know the details of why this started now. My involvement began when Streit's called me up and asked me if I could help them."

The Orthodox Union has also been in the plant within the last week, confirmed Rabbi Menachem Genack, the rabbinic administrator of the OU.

That's because Adler said he plans to engage a national hashgacha once again to work with Rabbi Soloveichik. "Fifteen years ago the Streit's name stood by itself. Certainly the Soloveichik name did. Nowadays if people want a national hashgacha then that's what we will give them."

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