

THE CLANTON PARK HERALD

A monthly newsletter, intended to provide timely and pertinent information to *shul* members

Vol 3, Issue 6, Purim 5766 website: www.clantonpark.com email: bulletin@clantonpark.com

From the Rav...

THE LESSON OF THE CONVERT

During this Purim period, we are reminded of the anti-Semitic outrages that all too frequently colour Jewish life. At a time like this it is important -- it is imperative-- that we are remind ourselves of the fact that whatever price our *yiddishkeit* exacts, it is small, indeed, in relation to the good fortune of being Hashem's *Am Segula*. The conversion conference, that I had the privilege of being asked to participate in this past week, helped bring that good fortune into clear perspective.

The agenda at the conference was, as you might expect, variegated. There were technological questions, such as the following: *halacha* dictates that a female convert wait the three-month *havchana* period conversion before marrying as a *bas yisrael*. The rationale for this waiting period is simple enough. We want to ascertain that she is not carrying a child from her previous non-Jewish life; a three-month period allows a prior pregnancy to exhibit itself. But current technology allows for so many different ways of ascertaining a woman's status without the requisite three-month waiting period. Is the waiting period still applicable? The agenda also included social issues. How should a *ger* interact with his or her non-Jewish family members? What about participating in lifecycle events that take on a religious flavour? And there were also the existential issues. What should the attitude of our exponentially shrinking Jewish people be towards the *geirus* process in general? And shrinking, we unfortunately are, at a rate more rapid than most people realize. People are familiar with the much-banded about 50% intermarriage rate. The true rate is, unfortunately, much higher than 50%. That 50% rate of same religion marriage includes Jews marrying people who have undergone non-Orthodox conversions, Jews marrying people with Jewish fathers who identify as Jews and, even, Jews marrying "self-converts". The 50% also includes the Orthodox community that, of course, marries exclusively Jewish. The intermarriage rate outside our little *frum* pocket is probably around 70%. At a time, and in a place, in which our community is disappearing, how high should the barriers to entry -- the barriers towards *halachic* conversion -- be?

But frankly, the thoughts going through my mind are neither technical, nor are they social. They are, rather, inspirational. A *geirus* convention, such as the one I attended, makes it patently obvious that many people want to become Jewish. Yes, some are motivated by an amorous relationship. And yes, social issues motivate others. We *frum* Jews, the beneficiaries of a structured community, take community life, with all of its attendant benefits, for granted. Those who live and die within the deadening anonymity of impersonal, modern urban life are drawn to our social structure. Yes, many contemporary *geirim* are motivated by outside factors.

Others, though, are motivated by the religion itself. By the beauty of a Shabbos, by the sanctity of family laws, by the divinity of our Torah. We've lived with that majesty for so long that we take it for granted. Others who do not touch the heavens on a daily basis are swept away by our *yiddishkeit*. And the fact that these *geirim* are ready to surmount extraordinary social, familial and economic hurdles just so that they can become part of our people is an inspiration for us and, more significantly, for our children. Our children, unfortunately, see the losses. They know that in every community, someone, somewhere has "gone off the *derech*." These losses cannot be swept under the carpet. Let our children also see the other side of the coin. Let them see people who are inspired by, who are attracted to, the beauty that defines our lives.

There is one particular *giyores* that will remain an inspiration to me and to my wife forevermore. My wife and I had the good fortune of spending a summer teaching in Akadem-Gorodok, a suburb of Novosibirsk, a Stalinist science center tucked deep into the Siberian tundra. There we came to know a woman on the path to *giyur*. She was determined that, somehow, some way, she would keep kosher. Kosher meats and dairy products were unavailable. Given the brutal climate and the awful state of Soviet transport, fruits and vegetables were also impossible to find. The cornucopia of canned and preserved products that are a staple of contemporary Western life, were unknown in the Soviet Union. She had bread, she had potatoes, and she had very, very little else. That bread, though, was bread baked from unenriched, white flour. This woman, understandably enough, was concerned about her diet; she was concerned that given her

limited sources of nutrition, this bread would not be healthful enough. Other breads and whole-wheat flour were unavailable. So, during the summer, she trudged out to the local farm, bought sacks of whole grains, processed and ground the whole grain flour that she needed. All of this because she was on the road to *giyur*.

Yes, my friends, knowing that others are interested in our lifestyle, knowing that others are ready to make great sacrifices to live the lifestyle we take for granted sends a message that we and that our children need to hear. That message will only strengthen our appreciation for something that all too many of us take all too much for granted.

Mazel Tovs

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Avram and Sarah Gal, on the birth of a baby boy. Mazel tov, as well to the grandparents, Nili Abrahams and Motti Kopstick, and to the great-grandparents, Percy and Frances Kopstick and Menashe and Rivka Laiman.

Avi and Elyan Rosenbaum, on the birth of a daughter, Racheli Rosenbaum. Mazel tov, as well, to the grandparents, Paul and Chavi Jacobs, and Dr. and Mrs. Jacob Rosenbaum of New York. Mazel tov, as well, to the great-grandmother, Mrs. Rose Romerovski, of New York.

Rabbi and Rebbetzin Yehoshua Weber, on the bar mitzvah of their son, Chaim Aharon.

Gary and Helen Muzin, on the engagement of their son, Dr. Nicolas David Muzin, to Andrea Zucker, of Charleston, South Carolina. Mazel tov, as well, to the grandparents, Dorothy Zucker, of Boca Raton, and Chaya Friedman, of Jacksonville.

Sammy and Soryl Nussbaum, on the engagement of their daughter, Leah, to Eytan Israel, of Milwaukee. Mazel tov, as well, to Scott and Shelley Israel, and to the grandparents, Necha Nussbaum and Rita Schreiber.

Murray and Clara Shore on the engagement of their son, Nachum, to Chana Libman of Thornhill. Mazel tov, as well, to the Drs. Bob and Esther Libman.

Shlomie and Breindy Ehrentreu, on the marriage of their daughter, Estie, to Tzvi Hertz, of New York.

Gerry and Madeline Greenberg, on the marriage of their son, Immanuel, to Gemma Rosenhead of London, England. Mazel tov, as well, to the grandmother, Mozelle Kanner.

George and Linda Hotstedter, on the birth of a granddaughter, to their children, Aliza and Michael Klugman. Mazel tov, as well, to the great-grandfather, Sandy Hofstedter.

David and Esther Taub, on the birth of their granddaughter, to their children, Eli and Shira Taub, in Israel. Mazel tov as well to the other grandparents, Steve and Pam Naumann, and to the great-grandmother, Piri Newman.

Morris and Margaret Perl on the engagement of their grandson, Josh Salmon, son of Dr. Peter and Ros Salmon, to Yael Diamond, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Aubie Diamond. Mazel tov, as well, to the grandparents: Allan and Esther Salmon, Miriam and David Diamond, and Mrs. Evelyn Rivers.

Condolences

To the Javasky family, on the passing of Boruch Javasky.

Sid Wellman and Annie Tencer, on the passing of their father. Menachem Mendle.

Dr. Jack Sandler, on the loss of his father, Dr. Louis Sandler.

Shul News and Rules

Purim Party and Purim Spiel.... On Purim night, Monday, March 13th, after *Megillah* reading, there will be a magnificent break-the-fast meal, and a spectacular Purim *spiel*, called *Shushan Sit Down*, presented by the Clanton Park Players, with music by Gershon Wachtel. Admission is \$10 per person, to a maximum of \$30 per family, which includes dinner and the show (a bargain!) Please make every effort to come out and join in the fun!

Second Megillah reading.... There will be a second *Megillah* reading at 9:00 PM.

Purim cards from the Sisterhood... are still available. Please contact Aviva Steinman.

The “Beginner’s Programme” at Clanton Park... Thanks to Rabbi Weber and the *shul* board, the programme is up and running! An exciting rotation of guest Rabbis and scholars are delivering programs rich in the beauty of traditional Judaism each *Shabbos*.

Several different men have volunteered their time to lead the program including such noted teachers as Rabbi Yitzchak Feigenbaum, Rabbi Dan Rand, Rabbi Mitch Mandel, and Rabbi Dovid Zauderer.

Designed to instruct, motivate, and educate attendees in the basics of a prayer service, the leader intersperses the *tefilos* with educational commentary. Each *Shabbos* morning program also offers explanations on the structure of the *siddur*, insights into different prayers, and a class on the foundations of Judaism.

Helping unaffiliated Jews reconnect with their heritage is a great responsibility and a privilege we as observant Jews share. Inviting coworkers, friends, or family members to our programme is a great step in helping them reconnect and see the beauty of Torah in their lives. The growth of the *Clanton Park Beginners’ Programme* will bring great *zchus* to our community.

The Clanton Park Executive ... has formulated the following guidelines, that all members are requested to adhere to:

BAALEI TEFILLA

Members are reminded that it is the job of the *Gabboim* to decide who is to lead the *davening*.

Those *davening* who have a *chiyuv* and wish to be the *baal tefilla* should advise the *Gabbai* present (if the *Gabbai* is not already aware).

It is not up to the members to make private arrangements between themselves as to who is to lead *davening* without informing the *Gabbai* present and getting his consent.

It is also not up to the members to intervene with someone chosen by the *Gabboim*.

If the *Gabboim* are not at the *minyán*, they are to appoint someone who is to be in charge.

NEW MINYANIM

As the *shul* attempts to accommodate the needs of the membership, there recently have been requests for new *minyanim*.

To provide a guideline for how new *minyanim* are to be set up, the Executive passed a procedure

to be followed which is intended to ensure that the requests for *minyanim* at new times are balanced with the need of ensuring that the existing *minyanim* are not unduly affected and that the new *minyanim* are run in keeping with the *shul's minhagim*.

The request to establish a new *minyán* should be brought first to the *Gabboim*.

The request should explain the reason why a new *minyán* is being requested and the names of a minimum of 13 men who are committed to attend on a regular basis. The attendees do not all have to be *shul* members.

If the *Gabboim* see merit to the request, they are to bring the matter to the Board for a decision.

There has to be at least one member who is prepared to act as *Gabbai* for the *minyán* on a regular basis and be responsible for the *minyán*, i.e., to ensure that the *shul's minhagim* and rules are adhered to.

The attendees are responsible to ensure that they leave the *shul* in proper order. That is, they are to put away *siddurim* and ensure that they leave the floor and tables clean.

BAALEI TEFILLA AT A SIMCHA

It has been the *shul's* policy that the *Chazzan* is the only person, other than the *bar-mitzva* boy, allowed to lead *davening* at a *Shabbos* morning *simcha*.

To accommodate the requests of some members, the Board has adopted a **new** policy:

The *baal simcha* making a *bar-mitzva* or *aufruf* may request that a person (other than the *Chazzan* or the *bar mitzvah* boy or *chasan*) *daven* for the *amud* for either *Shacharis* or *Musaf* (but not both) subject to the following:

The *Baal Tefillah* must be qualified *halachically* and have the ability to lead the *davening*. The name of the individual should be provided to the *Rav* at least four weeks before the *simcha* for approval.

Once approved by the *Rav*, one of the *Gabboim* should be advised of the request.

To clarify, the *bar mitzva* boy or *chasan* may lead both *Shacharis* and *Musaf*, or either one. If the *bar-mitzva* or *chasan* leads one of either *Shacharis* or *Musaf*, the *baal simcha* still has the option to choose someone to lead the other *tefillah*, subject to this procedure.

Home rental wanted ... We are a *shomer kashrut, shomer Shabbat* family of five looking to rent a home in the Bathurst Manor area (Sheppard-Wilson, Bathurst-Dufferin) from the beginning of August, 2006 to July 31, 2007, while in Toronto for a sabbatical year. I would appreciate if you could help us. David Genesove, Professor of Economics, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 91905 Israel
Tel: 972-2-588-3128 Fax: 972-2-581-6071
Email: genesove@mscc.huji.ac.il

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The President and Executive Board of Clanton Park Synagogue, invites the General Membership to its ANNUAL MEETING on Sunday, April 30, 2006 at 8:00 PM, in the Meyer Pik Social Hall, to:

- (a) Review the Synagogue Financial Statement for year-end 2005
- (b) Elect officers and directors
- (c) Answer any questions from synagogue members.

Youth News

All girls in grades 3-8 are invited to join Clanton Park Girl's Youth for a pre-Purim bash! ... On *Motzei Shabbos*, March 11, we will be creating amazing *graggers* and enjoying yummy *Hamentashen*. The program will take place in the *shul* basement from 8:15 - 9:30 PM. Please call Rebecca at (416) 633-3649 or email cpgirls youth@yahoo.ca to reserve your spot. Cost? *Free!!* (for members; \$5 for non-members).

A Purim surprise is in store after Megillah reading for all youth... Here is a poem which will give you some hints:
Purim Purim Purim Lanu!!!
Be ready, be prepared!
Dress a bit warm, for after the Megillah outside we will be!
A loose skirt will help!
A Mordechai and a Haman we need!
For through the streets of Shushan you will ride!
The fresh scent of the country you will smell!
Who knows, maybe an egg will be had, or a sheep you might shear??
If neither, surely a petting you must provide!

Megillas Esther Quiz

By Leibe Warner

- (1) What was the name of the wife of Haman?
- (2) How many sons did Haman have?

- (3) What food -- which is eaten on Pesach -- is mentioned in the *Megillah*?
- (4) The *Megillah* opens with two Hebrew words: "*Vayehi Bi'yema*". How many times does this expression appear in the entire *Tanach*? (Hint: the answer is stated in *Gemara Megillah*.)
- (5) What was the name of Esther's father?
- (6) Name the man who told Achashverosh that Haman was planning to hang Mordechai?
- (7) Identify a *passuk* in *Megilas Esther* that we say during *Havdalah*.
- (8) Identify a man whose name begins with the first three letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
- (9) What was the name of Mordechai's father?
- (10) There is a *midrash* that relates that of Achashverosh's 127 provinces, 100 were on the land and 27 were on the sea. The Vilna Gaon applies *gematria* to a certain *passuk* which hints that this is true. Identify the *passuk*.

Send your correct answers (after *Shabbos*) to bulletin@clantonpark.com, and your name will be entered into a draw for a gift certificate to **Negev Books**. Also, go to the *shul* website to see the answers to last bulletin's *Shemos* Quiz.

Purim throughout History

The earliest descriptions of Purim celebrations, from the Second Temple and Mishnaic eras, offer no indication of the irreverence that we associate with the festival. The emphasis is on the formal reading of the Scroll of Esther, which was to be conducted with great care and seriousness. None of the familiar themes of drinking, parody, etc. are mentioned in Talmudic sources emanating from the Land of Israel. In fact, the chief Palestinian rabbinic exposition of Esther, the *Midrash Esther Rabbah*, seems to take every possible opportunity to emphasize the dangers of wine, incorporating a lengthy tract on the virtues of temperance.

It was the Jews of Babylonia who introduced some of the more frivolous customs into the observance of Purim. Two main factors can be traced to the Babylonian Talmud: "Purim-Torah" and the encouragement of drunkenness. Much later, among German Jews, the institution of the "*Purim Shpiel*" was developed. To German Jewry we also owe the adoption of the *Hamantasch*, an adaptation of the German "mahn-tash" ("poppy-pocket") pastry, given a new meaning for the occasion.

Our custom of sounding noisemakers at the mention of Haman's name is also a version of an old practice, which took on different forms through the generations. The earliest sources (from the writings of the Babylonian *Geonim*) speak of burning effigies of Haman on a bonfire. In medieval Europe, children would write Haman's name on stones or wood blocks, and bang them until the name was erased.