

Introduction

The collection of essays that comprise this inaugural volume of writings by KMS members, very much represents what ties so many of us to this particular synagogue community. Even while our interests, backgrounds and professional activities vary, we enjoy practicing Judaism with one another and sharing and debating our thoughts on a regular basis. We actively support Ben Zoma's dictum (*Pirkei Avot 4:1*) "*Aitzelhu Chacham? Halomed Mikol Adam, SheNe'emar Mikol Melamdai Hiskalti, Ki Eidocheha Sichu Li*" (Who is the wise individual? He or she who learns from every person, as it is written, (*Tehilim 119:99*) "From all my teachers have I developed my mind, Your testimonies were conveyed to me.) The *D'Yer Torah* on *Shabbat* mornings, as well as the wide range of presentations taking place on *Shabbat* afternoons, are given by any number of individuals who seek to stimulate and be stimulated in return by serious ideas, passionately presented within a group of supportive friends and acquaintances. This journal proceeds to further our efforts to exchange ideas and experiences -- seeking to maintain an inspiring level of discourse among ourselves and even draw the wider community into our discussions. I encourage one and all to read the selections, respond to them, and join our "conversation" either verbally or in print. We are grateful to editor Roy Pinchot as well as all the contributors and hope that this is just the first volume of another wonderful KMS tradition.

Rabbi Jack Bieler

REMEMBERING A CADOL

By Rabbi Jack Bieler

The passing on Tuesday, the 7th of Adar I of R. Chayim Yaakov Goldvicht, *ZTz"l*, founding Rosh Yeshiva of *Yeshivat Kerem BYavneh* set off a flood of personal memories. I spent 1969-71 learning in his *Yeshiva*, and I can easily say that the Rosh Yeshiva's presence was certainly one of several significant factors that made these years so incredibly pivotal in my religious development. Attempting to briefly describe his achievements as well as cite some of my memories from *Yavneh*, constitutes a humble effort to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to this special Torah personality and the institution that he built literally and figuratively from scratch.

Long lists of facts and accomplishments can invariably be cited when the life of a great individual is reviewed, and the Rosh Yeshiva is no exception to this rule. In addition to his familial traditions as a *Bianer Chassid*, his intellectual pedigree included stints as a student and *Beir Bayit* (virtual member of the household) of both the *Brisker Rav* and the *Chazon Ish*, two of the greatest *Talmudists* of recent generations. As prodigious a mind as *Rav Goldvicht* possessed, he apparently was not satisfied to merely sit and learn. At the astoundingly young age of only 29 he founded *Kerem BYavneh*, located on the historical site of where the *Sanhedrin* had been situated at the bequest of R. Yochanan b. Zakai, following the destruction of the Second Temple. The *Yeshiva* was turned into a dramatic symbol of Zionist Orthodoxy when the Rosh Yeshiva created the idea of the *Hesder* program, whereby Israeli *Yeshiva* students could combine their Jewish studies with army service over the course of five years. *Kerem BYavneh* was the first such institution, and it therefore understandably attracted to it very special Israelis, individuals who were equally dedicated to Torah study as well as protecting their country as part of *TzaHa"l*'s most elite fighting units. Their bravery and self-sacrifice unfortunately is only too well documented by the long-list of *Korbanot* (including one of my roommates at whose home I spent *Pesach*) who gave up their lives while on duty as part of their *Hesder* service, particularly during the *Yom Kippur War* of 1973. Today, *Rav Goldvicht's*

concept has given rise to 30 such institutions throughout Israel with 5 more scheduled to open next year. The positive impact that Yeshiva students serving in the army has had on the entire Israeli society not only manifested itself in the positive terms by which those wearing *Kipot Senu-ger* were viewed by secularists, but was even officially acknowledged by the Israeli government in 1991, when the Rosh Yeshiva accepted the prestigious Israel Prize on behalf of the entire *Hesder* movement.

But it is important to remember a great individual not only for the things that he might have achieved in the public eye of society at large, but also the manner in which he was able to influence those with whom he came into contact on an ongoing basis within the walls of his own institution. And it is in that spirit that I would like to acknowledge the effect that R. Goldvicht had upon me, realizing full well that the literally thousands of students with whom he interacted during his forty years of serving as Rosh Yeshiva would each be able to add his own reminiscences.

The Rosh Yeshiva was the first to impress upon me the meaning of *Kavod HaTora* (the honor that is due the Torah). There was always an air of *Malchut* (royalty) that seemed to emanate from him, and I associated this with the Torah that he represented and obviously took so seriously. R. Goldvicht was always dressed and groomed immaculately. In his younger years, his bright red beard contrasted memorably with his black coat and hat, white shirt and tie. He had a most distinctive voice, and although the *Beit Midrash* of the Yeshiva was large and cavernous, during *Tefilla* and *Shiur*, one could hear the Rosh Yeshiva's voice wherever one happened to sit. Since the Rosh Yeshiva had suffered a major heart attack shortly before I arrived at Yavneh, he was under doctor's orders to remain in bed on *Yom HaKippurim* and not to stay up all night *Shavuos*, certainly two of the most central religious moments in the life of any Yeshiva. However, R. Goldvicht would come into the *Beit Midrash* for *Neti-la* as well as early morning *Shacharit* on *Shavuos*, and his entry was always such a special event for everyone in the Yeshiva. Not only was one expected to rise as the Rosh Yeshiva would pass by, but when you spoke to him, you did so in the third person. I remember how odd this seemed at first to an American brought up in the best spirit of egalitarianism. At YU, with the exception of the Rav, *ZTZ"L*, and *Yibadel LeChayim*, R. Lichtenstein, we did not stand even when our Rebbe came into the room to give Shiur. And were our teacher to walk by us in the *Beit*

Midrash, cafeteria or library on the Washington Heights campus, there would hardly be a stir among those seated nearby. But I found that rather than resenting or looking down at this new protocol that I encountered at Yavneh, it struck me as making sense and indeed the proper thing to do. It was not that the Rosh Yeshiva would deliberately demand such treatment, but rather that his total demeanor made it seem so natural. I felt this to be an important lesson that I learned from and through him.

Another indelible memory associated unfortunately with his ill-health, was that every year, upon the anniversary of his heart attack, following *Ma'ariv*, the Rosh Yeshiva would announce to all assembled in the *Beit Midrash*, how he acknowledges the great miracle of his recovery from his serious illness. Rather than bemoaning the limitations that his medical condition imposed upon him, R. Goldvicht turned his situation into an opportunity for positive, spiritual expression. His commitment to publicly stating his appreciation to *HaShem* for being able to continue to do the things he loved, as strenuous as they were, constituted a significant lesson for me as well as my fellow students.

While the *Shiurei Kellahim* (weekly public lectures for the entire Yeshiva) as well as the special classes in the *Brisker Derech* that he gave to YU students, clearly affirmed his great Torah erudition, Rav Goldvicht was careful to deeply and clearly impress us with two other aspects of Jewish tradition. On the one hand, *Midrash*, *Mussar* (Jewish ethical teachings) and *Machshava* (Jewish thought and general approach to the world) figured prominently in the many *Sechot* (group lectures) that the Rosh Yeshiva would unceasingly present. To this day, I treasure the notebook in which I recorded so many of R. Goldvicht's ideas, some of which I regularly incorporate into my present-day teaching, some twenty five years later. I credit him directly for developing my appreciation for *Midrash* and *Aggada* as well as the works *Sefat Emet*, *Meshech Chochma*, and the writings of the *MaHaRa"L*. On the other hand, the Rosh Yeshiva's Chassidic background was clearly in evidence when he would lead the students in song. At Yavneh, as much of the *Tefillot* were sung as possible, and *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov Zemirot* were melodious and powerful. Not only did the Yeshiva rely on those who had already spent a number of years in Yavneh and therefore were fully acquainted with the Yeshiva's *Nigunim*, but the *B'nai Chutz LaAretz* (non-Israeli students) also were quickly enlisted into contributing to and even leading the experience. I

recall one year when practically all of the Israelis had been called into the army shortly before *Rosh HaShana*, and it was unclear how many would be allowed to return for *Yom Tov*. The Rosh Yeshiva announced that all of the *Bachurei Yeshiva* present should bring their *Machzorim* and assemble in the cafeteria on Friday evening after the *Senat Shabbat*. Once we had arrived, R. Goldvicht personally taught us for several hours the tunes that the Yeshiva uses during the *Tefillot*, in order that we could fill in for the missing Israelis during *Yom Tov*. Needless to say, it was a memorable event. The powerful effect that the Yeshiva *Tefillot*, those of the *Yomim Noraim* in particular, had upon me was evidenced in my decision to stay a second year right after my first *Yom Kippur* at Yavneh. My concept of what *Tefilla Betzibbur* could and should be can be directly attributable to my experiences at Yavneh, under the leadership and inspiration of R. Goldvicht.

Even as I write these lines, fresh anecdotes and conversations flood my mind. I am astounded when I consider the extent of this man's influence upon me, which then has to be multiplied by his effect upon the Yavneh students during the past forty years. I only hope that we will all be able to repay even a small portion of what we were given by the Rosh Yeshiva by passing on some of these lessons and traditions to our peers, children and students.

THE PROBLEM OF MODERN ORTHODOXY

By Roy Pinchot

The dilemma of Modern Orthodoxy is analyzed in Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' recent book, *Tradition in an Untraditional Age*. Rabbi Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, quotes David Singer:

What went wrong? Why did the dream of a modern Orthodox utopia turn to ashes? For a time I was convinced that Modern Orthodoxy had failed... Now I know better: Modern Orthodoxy did not fail, it never happened!.. In their heart of hearts, most Modern Orthodox leaders felt guilty about what they were saying and doing. Their model of authentic Jewishness remained that of the East European Yeshiva world.

The sociologist Charles Leibman, who has studied Modern Orthodoxy, has reinforced this idea: "Modern Orthodoxy was not a left wing movement because it was not a movement; it was to some of its adherents a state of sin and to the remainder a condition of schizophrenia."

Indeed, what has gone wrong? Today, we know there are large groups of Jews who claim they are Modern Orthodox, but there is an absence of leadership — an absence of a movement. Both Jonathan Sacks and Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University, have attempted to set forth a conception of Modern Orthodoxy in their books, *Tradition in an Untraditional Age*, *One People*, and *Torah Umada*. Yet, I would like to suggest that the root of the dilemma that has gripped Modern Orthodoxy has not been illuminated by these or other writers on this subject. This root is the reason that Modern Orthodoxy has been unable to find its own legitimacy, either in its own eyes or in the eyes of the Haredi movement.

I would like to begin by epitomizing the ideas of two of Modern Orthodoxy's strongest supporters: Jonathan Sacks and Norman Lamm. Both men highlight the history of the Jewish thinkers who attempted to