



Community Currents



Budapest Shul Hears Prayers Once Again

This year *Tisha b'Av* in Budapest was a bit irregular. The community had a chance to read *Eicha* at the Rumbach synagogue, which has been closed for more than 50 years.



The building itself was constructed by Otto Wagner and built by donations between 1869 and 1872. The synagogue was unfortunately damaged during WWII and although there were a number of attempts at renovation, it was never restored. This *Tisha B'Av* marked the first time the shul was used for religious services since 1959.

Among the participants at the *Tisha B'Av* service were chief rabbi of Hungary Róbert Deutsch, Rabbi Seth Braunstein, director of The Szarvas Fellowships program, Rabbi Péter Deutsch of Keter HaTorah Israel/Hungary, and Rabbi Péter Totha, chief rabbi of the Hungarian Army.

Also in attendance were Israeli and American kids taking part in the Szarvas International Youth Camp and Hungarians from throughout the country.



Shema Kolainu Legislative Breakfast

By Sara Nuta, Michelle Sabbagh, and Jonathan Shabshaikhes

Shema Kolainu recently held a legislative breakfast co-chaired by Abe Biderman, president of Met Council on Jewish Poverty, and Abe Eisner, chairman of HASC Center. Menachem Lubinsky and Kalman Yeger served as MCs of the breakfast which featured a wide array of elected officials and community activists from across New York.

Dr. Joshua Weinstein, founder and president of Shema Koleinu, delivered opening remarks and said, "Shema Kolainu has grown from a local institution to a global one.... The mission of Shema Kolainu is to allow children with autism to enjoy a better life and a better future."

Among those honored were Dr. Merryl H. Tisch, chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, NYC Councilmember Andrew Cohen, and Zelig Friedman of The Tantzlers.

Dr. Tisch, who was honored for her commitment to children with autism, said, "We cannot fix what G-d has done, we must accept it. But what we can do is stand up to help every family and every child in these most challenging circumstances."

NYC Councilmember Andrew Cohen, Chair of the Council's Mental Health Committee, received the Appreciation Award presented by Councilmember David Greenfield. "Andrew Cohen single-handedly saved millions of dollars for mental health services," said Greenfield.



NYC Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina addressing the participants. (Photo by Shmuel Lenchevsky)



NYS Assemblymember Dov Hikind, NYS Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz, NYC Councilmember Mark Levine, Peter Rebenwurz, Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Ezra Friedlander, NYC Councilmember David Greenfield, NYC Councilmember Andrew Cohen, Menachem Lubinsky, Milton Weinstock, Abe Eisner, and NYS Assemblyman David Weprin.

Project Inspire Prepares For More Inspiration

Project Inspire staff met last week with over 75 Flatbush community leaders representing 40 shuls to begin preparing for the upcoming Shabbos Project, scheduled for *Parshas Lech Lecha* in October.

Isaac Gross, who along with Project Inspire has been a force behind the initiative in Flatbush, said that having someone experience a real Shabbos is the perfect way to bring someone close to Judaism. He repeated a story from Rav Noach Weinberg, *zt"l*, about a 90-year-old woman in a nursing home who changed her life and became observant because somebody reached out to her with passion and care.

"Everyone," he said, "can find opportunities to do this if they have the same passion and care."

Rabbi Gabi Sassoon also addressed the gathering, saying that the best way to strengthen our own Shabbos observance is by helping others experience Shabbos. The upcoming Shabbos Project will be dedicated *l'iluy nishmas* his seven children. "They were taken on Shabbos," he said, "and our best response is to be *mechazek* our own Shabbos."

Rabbi Chaim Sampson, director of Project Inspire, discussed several significant changes for this coming year. One of them is a new concept

called "Tishrei Triple Play" by which outreach can be accomplished in stages. "Sometimes it's easier to strike up a relationship slowly over time," he explained. "So we are offering a gift of honey that can be sent for Rosh Hashanah to break the ice. Then your guests can be invited to your *sukkah* for a visit or perhaps a meal on *Chol HaMoed*. After those two overtures, chances are they will be more inclined to accept an invitation for the Shabbos Project."

Also key will be the "Challah Bake," a moving and inspiring event for women that was successfully implemented in South Africa last year. "We are hoping to have 2,000 women participate," he said. "That means a thousand Flatbush women will be inviting a thousand not-yet-frum ladies and they will all bake challah together."

Rabbi Yoni Zakutinsky of Project Inspire spoke about using *kiruv* as an opportunity to be a positive role model for our own children. "It's important," he explained, "for our children to see how we interact with those who are not yet *frum*. It's a tremendous lesson for them." He also said that those who help take care of "Hashem's children" will ultimately be blessed in that He will in turn take care of "our children."

