

COMMUNITY

Home for college, but making the year in Israel stick

BY MALKA EISENBERG

Rabbi Zev Cinamon, the rosh yeshiva of The Yeshiva Gedolah of West Hempstead pulled no punches in laying out his view of the world and where his yeshiva fits in. It's a complex, but vivid analogy: the yeshiva is like an Ir Miklat, a biblical city of refuge, he said. The yeshiva student who learns there is like the hapless perpetrator of an accidental killing, on the run from his victim's family. If you're following along, the victim's family represents the negative influences of the secular world.

Young men who have attended Yeshiva day school through 12th grade, and even some who have then spent a year or two in Israeli yeshivot, can feel a weakening of their connection to Judaism while attending secular colleges. A survey by the United Jewish Communities Over found as many as 10 to 15 percent reported feeling that way. The Yeshiva Gedolah of West Hempstead is an effort to fill the void and instead strengthen the students' commitment to Judaism.

"Our yeshiva is like the branches of a tree in the Ir Miklat," said Rabbi Cinamon at the first annual breakfast for YGWH held in September. "The branches may stretch outside the town but they still protect the person."

The yeshiva is an affiliate of Kesharim, a campus oriented non-for-profit whose goal is to establish a Torah environment for Jewish college students in secular universities across the United States. This enables yeshiva high school graduates to continue to advance their Jewish studies and remain connected to a Jewish social and religious network and activities. Here interested and committed students will find ongoing programs of learning, inspiration, guidance and camaraderie to motivate them to maintain their affiliation with the Torah world. The program generally provides shiurim between college classes, during club hour and at breaks. It has branches in Barnard, Baruch, Brooklyn College, Queens College, NYU, College of Staten Island, University of Pennsylvania, Rutgers and University of Michigan.

Yeshiva Gedolah of West Hempstead, said Rabbi Cinamon, "is structured for the more serious student who is looking to devote more time during the



Rabbi Zev Cinamon

day in a more traditional yeshiva setting. It's a way to find balance in life. We know that the students have to take classes that are important to them to fulfill their majors and we help them adjust their schedules and give them guidance so they can take the classes they need and don't miss out on learning time."

Rabbi Cinamon is the Rosh HaYeshiva and a magid shiur at YGWH. He has over ten years of experience giving shiurim and working with students at the Bait Midrash level on Long Island and in Queens. For eight of those years he was a rebbe in Rambam Mesivta. He is also a practicing attorney, is author of multiple seforim and gives weekly shiurim throughout the community. He is a musmach of HaRav Yisroel Chait Shlita and a graduate of Brooklyn Law School. The yeshiva helps students "develop good balancing skills," stressed Rabbi Cinamon, "so when they enter the work force they will be able to understand the importance of making time for learning."

Aside from offering a strong, warm base for the college level student, YGWH has expanded into community classes offering weekly shiurim for men and a once-monthly shiur for women. The yeshiva also presents guest speakers including Rabbi Yehuda Pearl of Congregation Anshe Shalom, the yeshiva's home base, and Rabbi Efram Schwab of Congregation Eitz Chaim of West Hempstead. Other speakers have included Rabbi Dovid Orlovsky of Ohr Sameach, and the Rosh Kollel of Kollel Toras Chaim in Yerushalayim, Rabbi Mordechai Levine, a close talmud of Rabbi Chaim

Pinchas Scheinberg. Rabbi Sholom Axelrod, the founder and director of Kesharim and the assistant Rabbi at Great Neck Synagogue visits fairly regularly.

Rabbi Yossi Azose, a computer consultant and a member of Anshe Shalom, and an experienced Rebbe, gives a shiur on Fridays on inyanei deyoma, a Gemara shiur on different topics for the college boys and the baalei batim. "It's terrific for the community," he said. "Having learning in the morning in West Hempstead is a tremendous thing, a very positive experience. The yeshiva has a tremendous potential to continue to grow. The more word gets out it will continue to be a success."

Currently, the student body draws from the Five Towns, West Hempstead and Plainview. It was set up to be convenient to Hofstra University, Nassau Community College and Adelphi University.

Ross Eisenberg is a student at YGWH. He is a graduate of North Shore Hebrew Academy in Great Neck and is currently an accounting major at Queens College. "I feel very comfortable in this yeshiva," he said. "Rabbi Cinamon is a great guy and a great teacher. The guys are very warm and welcoming. It has a nice program and it works out for me. With Queens in the afternoon and yeshiva in the morning, it just brightens the day. Rabbi Cinamon is close to the guys and calls up to see how they're doing."

Eisenberg is learning there this year and plans on continuing next year. The learning includes chavrusa study and daily shiurim in in-depth Talmudic analysis, and practical Halacha and weekly shiurim in parsha and hashkafa. The yeshiva is also planning a shabbaton at the end of February.

"The goal of the yeshiva," emphasized Rabbi Cinamon, "is to provide the interested student with a warm and nurturing environment where he can grow in Torah and Midot while pursuing a secular education. I hope that the boys stay as long as possible at least while in college and hopefully beyond in graduate school and while working to the extent possible."

For further information about the Yeshiva Gedolah of West Hempstead call (516) 882-3765 or email: Yeshiva@YGWH.org or look at their website www.YGWH.org.