

MY MACHBERESNEWS AND VIEWS OF THE YESHIVISH
AND CHASIDISHE WORLD**RABBI GERSHON TANNENBAUM**
RAV, CONG. BNAI ISRAEL**Satmar: What's Next?**

After six-and-a-half years of quarreling within the Satmar *Kehillah*, on Tuesday, November 20, 2007, the New York State Court of Appeals, the highest court in the State, affirmed the decision handed down by the State Supreme Court. The Supreme Court chose not to make a determination as to the validity of any board elections within Satmar, holding that it could not decide the dispute through the application of neutral principles of law because the resolution of the issues would require it to apply ecclesiastical (religious) doctrine in violation of the First Amendment.

The Appellate Division, consisting of a Chief Judge and seven Associate Judges, with one dissent and one abstention, agreed with the Supreme Court. "Resolution of the parties' dispute would necessarily involve impermissible inquiries into religious doctrine and the Congregation's membership requirements."

The question to the Court of Appeals: "Was the decision and order of this [Supreme] Court dated July 11, 2006 properly made?" The Court of Appeals affirmed, meaning that the decision not to intervene remains in place.

Is There A Winner?

This new development appears to favor the faction supporting Rabbi Zalman Leib Teitelbaum. However, a careful review would reveal that the original fight is still in full force and unresolved. The dispute began in 1999, when Rabbi Zalman Leib, then Jerusalem Satmar Rav, was appointed as Satmar Rav of Williamsburg, by his father Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum, *zt"l* (1914-2006), late Satmar Rebbe.

That appointment was announced and viewed as a pre-determination of Rabbi Zalman Leib, as his father's successor, by-passing the older son, Rabbi Aaron Teitelbaum, who was appointed as Kiryas Yoel (Satmar) Rav and Rosh Yeshiva Satmar in 1981 by his father. Having served with distinction, his succession to his father's seat had been anticipated.

However, with the appointment of Rabbi Zalman Leib as Williamsburg Rav, the huge *Kehillah* was polarized, with supporters of Rabbi Aaron and supporters of Rabbi Zalman Leib, literally battling each other.

Who Succeeds?

Though the Court of Appeals decision mentions the claim of Rabbi Zalman Leib's supporters that he was appointed Satmar Rebbe by his father as contested, the letter purportedly written by the father, simply designates him as successor in Williamsburg alone. In addition, Rabbi Aaron's followers vehemently argue against the integrity of such appointment and such letter.

Regardless of the legalities and challenges, both Rabbi Aaron and Rabbi Zalman Leib have been declared as the successor Satmar Rebbe by their respective followers. Those declarations are not diminished by any action or decision in any secular court.

Why Not Beth Din?

Supporters of Rabbi Aaron sought to bring the dispute into *beth din*. Supporters of Rabbi Zalman Leib agreed to resolve their differences in Satmar's in-house *beth din*. Rabbi Aaron's supporters demurred, noting the obvious bias the Satmar *beth din* would have, since it is wholly populated with pro-Rabbi Zalman Leib *dayanim*. Rabbi Aaron's supporters then again sought unsuccessfully to move the dispute to an "independent" *beth din*. The matter landed in secular court, with both sides accusing the other for bringing that about.

Who's Who In Satmar Elections

In May, of 2001, both factions simultaneously conducted separate elections of the board of directors and officers for the Brooklyn congregation. The first election resulted in the election of Berl Friedman to continue as president. The second election, which took place the same day, and is claimed to have been certified by Rabbi Moshe, resulted in the election of Jacob Kahan as president.

Berl Friedman leads the faction supporting Rabbi Aaron, and Jacob Kahan leads the faction supporting Rabbi Zalman Leib. The secular court was asked to decide which board was officially in charge of directing and representing the main corporation (Congregation Yetev Lev D'Satmar, Inc.).

Calm Before The Storm

As long as the father, Rabbi Moshe, was alive, Rabbi Aaron's supporters did not challenge the father's honor or Rabbi Zalman Leib's tenure in the Main Satmar Beis Medrash at 152 Rodney Street in Williamsburg. When Rabbi Moshe passed away in April 2006, Rabbi Zalman Leib continued unchallenged because the opposing faction

would have had to physically force him out. The risking of arrest and possible jail time for disorderly behavior and breaking the peace, as much as they may have wished to, is just simply not in the nature of *Chassidim*.

Thus, Rabbi Zalman Leib remains ensconced as Rav of the Main Satmar Beis Medrash and in all satellite Satmar shuls populated with his supporters. The Court of Appeals, in declining any action in the matter, maintains the status quo and Rabbi Zalman Leib continues as Satmar Rebbe, pending any further intervention.

Rabbi Aaron's supporters built new Satmar shuls in Williamsburg, which they dominate. Rabbi Aaron's son, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, former Antwerp Satmar Rav, has been appointed as Williamsburg Satmar Rav for Rabbi Aaron's supporters.

On Wednesday evening, November 28, Rabbi Zalman Leib met with his supporters and announced that they are proceeding with the completion of the new Satmar shul on Bedford Avenue, supposedly destined to become the world's largest synagogue.

Rabbi Zalman Leib resides now in the community rabbinical home of his late father and receives his petitioners and conducts all-important organizational meetings at the home.

Since his mother, Rebbetzin Pessel Leah (may her health improve and may she live to be 120) lives in this home, no attempt is being made to dislodge him. In the summer of 1945, Rebbetzin Pessel Leah, daughter of Rabbi Aaron Teitelbaum, *zt"l HY"D* (1881-1944), Nirbator Rav, married Rabbi Moshe, then Sigeter Rav. Rabbi Moshe had lost his first wife and their three children in the Holocaust.

The Main Satmar Beis Medrash in Kiryas Yoel belongs to a separate corporation (Congregation Yetev Lev D'Satmar of Kiryas Yoel, Inc.) and is not contested. The Main Satmar Beis Medrash in Boro Park belongs to the same umbrella corporation (Congregation Yetev Lev D'Satmar, Inc.) that owns the Main Satmar Beis Medrash in Williamsburg.

As opposed to the Williamsburg Main Satmar Beis Medrash, the Boro Park Main Satmar Beis Medrash at 53rd Street is populated with supporters of Rabbi Aaron. Supporters of Rabbi Zalman Leib are now building their own *beis medrash* on 52nd Street.

Since the dispute is ongoing and unresolved, adjudication will either be an acceptance by both sides of the present status quo: Rabbi Zalman Leib retains leadership of the Williamsburg Main Satmar Beis Medrash and its satellite organizations and buildings and Rabbi Aaron retains leadership of Kiryas Yoel and satellite organizations and buildings. The alternative is the pursuit of resolution in some other venue, such as arbitration, *beth din*, or by Heavenly intervention.

A Victory For Jerusalem At Kever Dovid

In the spring of 2006, *Kever Dovid*, the resting place of King David, *zt"l*, situated on Mount Zion, Jerusalem, was under threat of being traded to the Vatican in exchange for an unused ancient shul in Toledo, Spain. This was reportedly on the agenda of then Israeli President Moshe Katsav's meeting at the Vatican, as published in the Vatican newspaper. In response to international protests, the Office of the President of Israel denied that any such negotiations were underway and the issue, so

**Kollel at Kever Dovid.**

to speak, fell off the table.

A number of meetings on behalf of *Kever Dovid* took place here in New York, some of which were attended by leading activists, as well as by Israel Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger and leaders of the *Igud HoRabonim*. The efforts were successful. As a result of the intensified attention, the numbers of visitors to *Kever Dovid* on Mount Zion in Jerusalem increased. In addition, plans were made to accommodate an increased number of Torah students within the immediate area of *Kever Dovid*. Rabbi Mordechai Goldstein, *rosh yeshiva* of Diaspora Yeshiva on Mount Zion, worked tirelessly to achieve an increase of Torah activities at *Kever Dovid*.

We are overjoyed to report that Kollel Metzuyanim, known as the Schottenstein Kollel of Excellence, is celebrating its first full year of intensive Torah study in the building opposite *Kever Dovid* on Mount Zion. The Kollel attracted 36 top young men who have come from renowned yeshivos such as Ponovez and Chevron.

The *kollel* just released its first volume of *Sefer Kollel Ma'amarim*, a collection of Talmudic novella by *kollel* members, and a copy was presented to Jay Schottenstein in the offices of Uri Lupolianski, mayor of Jerusalem, and a major supporter of the *kollel*.

The *sefer* has the glowing approbations of Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, a leading *posek*, as well as from Rabbi Shmuel Markowitz of the Ponovez Yeshiva. In this time of concern for our Holy City of Jerusalem and the challenges it is now facing, good news is especially welcome.

Joy In Liska

On Wednesday evening, November 28, Ezra Pinchas Friedlander married Fradel Rus (Gubi) Fleischman. The *chassan* is the son of Rabbi Zvi Hersh Friedlander, Liska Rebbe; son of Rabbi Yozef Friedlander, *zt"l* (1918-1971), Liska Rebbe who survived the Holocaust, emigrated to the United States in 1947, and established the Liska Beis Medrash in Boro Park and is interred on *Har HaMenuchos* adjacent to the Belzer Rebbe, *zt"l*; son of Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Friedlander, *zt"l HY"D* (1874-1944), Liska Rebbe and author of *Sha'arei HaYosher*, who was murdered in the Holocaust; son of Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, *zt"l* (1840-1904), Liska Rebbe and author of *Tal Chaim*; son-in-law of Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Friedman, *zt"l* (1890-1874), founding Liska Rebbe and author of *Ach Pri Tevuah*.

**Liska Rebbe**

Yitzchok Derbaremdiker, *zt"l* (1740-1810), revered Berditchever Rebbe and author of *Kedushas Levi*; and Rabbi Elimelech Weissblum, *zt"l* (1717-1787), Lijensker Rebbe and author of *Noam Elimelech*.

After serving in numerous political capacities, the *chassan* established the Friedlander Group, a full-service public relations agency providing communications counsel and services for government, corporate, and non-profit clients. In addition to having U.S. Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Shema Koleinu, as well as the City of Beitar in Israel as clients, the *chassan* is consulted by many of New York City's political and community activists.

The *kallah*, a member of the prominent Kahan-Fleischman family of Hungary, was born and raised in Budapest. Her renowned family traces its origins to Pressburg and to the Sighet region of Marmarosh, Romania (today in Ukraine).

She was privileged to be among the starting students at Masoret Avot of Budapest, the first Jewish school in a former Soviet satellite country, founded by David Moskovits, prominent Boro Park businessman and activist. After the untimely passing of her parents, the *kallah* was invited by Yaakov and Eleanor Hirsch to join their family and home.

The *aufruf* took place in the Liska Beis Medrash and the *chasunah* was celebrated at the Renaissance in Boro Park. The Liska Rebbe, father of the *chassan*, was the *Mesader Kiddushin*; Rabbi Yaakov Shlomo Meisels, Limnover Rav in Williamsburg, read the *kesubah*:

Yaakov Hirsch recited the first two *berachos*; and Rabbi Avrohom Yehoshua Heshel Friedlander, Hivnover Rav, recited the last *brachah*. *Seder Hadlakas Neiros Chanukah* with Liska customs and *Divrei Torah* of the Liska Rebbe was published especially for the wedding and distributed to all guests.

Sunday night's *sheva berachos* took place at the new Fusion Steakhouse, 3223 Quentin Road in the Marine Park section of Brooklyn, and Monday night's *sheva berachos* was at the new hall of Congregation Anshe Sfard in Boro Park. Hosted by leading community activist Ben Barber, it also had the participation of Israel's Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger.