

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Rav Shlomo Gottfried, Israeli War Hero And Chassidic Jew

By Chaim Leibtag

Throughout Jewish history, our nation has been led by remarkable and special people. Individuals who defy public accolades and just do the job, and get it done. One such person was Rabbi Shlomo Gottfried, z"l, who passed away this past April shortly before *Pesach*. Rabbi Gottfried, z"l, a Boyaner chasid whose love for *Eretz Yisrael* knew no bounds, was especially fond of Yerushalaim and in his own way, became the master architect in the renewal of the Old City. He was feted at the Annual Dinner of the American Friends of Ateret Cohanim in 2011 with the with the "Builders of Jerusalem" award.

Born in New Jersey in 1929, he became close to Rabbi Yitzchok Ochs and Rabbi Elimelech Tress who encouraged him to learn in Torah Vodaath. There he became close to Rabbi Moshe Zev Katz, z"l, a staunch Boyaner chasid, and that shaped his lifelong connection to Boyaner chassidus. His every decision was discussed with the Rebbe and he was known as a role



model for other Chassidim in his staunch *emunah*.

In 1948, Rabbi Gottfried volunteered to serve in the Israel Army as the new nation struggled to establish its independence surrounded by enemies on all sides. When a similar situation arose in 1967 as Nasser proclaimed "Death to the Jews," Rabbi Gottfried again volunteered for the Israeli Army. He did this one more time in 1973 during the Yom Kippur War, and, in spite of an exemption granted him by the government as he had a wife and nine children, he served with honor and distinction. Finally, due to his age of better than 50, he was exempted from service during the Lebanon War.

Volunteering for the army was not his only passion. He was instrumental in establishing the Agudist settlement of Chofetz Chaim and that helped him decide that he was to settle in *Eretz Yisrael*. His Rebbe encouraged him to make the difficult move and he first settled in Yerushalayim and later moved to Bnei Brak, joining the Boyaner community. There he was instrumental in establishing the Ruzhiner *kloiz* on Chofetz Chaim Street. Following this success, he went on to establish the Boyaner *kloiz* on Rabinov Street. A man of many skills, he moved back to Yerushalayim and served on the board of Mesivta Tiferes Yisroel and was one of the principal supporters.

Faced with many challenges, including the loss of his first wife and business challenges, Rabbi Gottfried moved to a modest apartment in the Arzei Habirah neighborhood in Yerushalayim. He remarried, and in time turned his business losses into a successful import – export company called Yehudah. He contributed to many causes including the "National Center for Family Purity" and paid for the construction of 10 *mikvaos*. He supported institutions in Yehuda and Shomron, Chevron and was deeply saddened and fought hard to stop the expulsion of Jews from Gush Katif.

His connection to the Old City of Yerushalayim and the anti terror barrier near the Old City came inadvertently, when he purchased a home right next to the barrier in the Kidmat Zion neighborhood. Gottfried bought the house in spite of the Arab squatters living there. With the help of the Moskowitz family who helped with the purchase and with the legal effort, he was able to establish a home that was built in a way that leaves the house inside the Jewish part of Jerusalem.

In the most recent journal of American Friends of Ateret Cohanim, he is remembered "as a Jewish stalwart and longstanding supporter of Ateret Cohanim and its endeavors. Reb Shlomo z"l literally extended the borders of Jerusalem in helping establish the eastern Kidmat Zion neighborhood.

"His building supplies company has supported Ateret Cohanim for many years and as a result, helped add Jewish life to the heart of Jerusalem.

"Reb Shlomo successfully merged a pure chassidic life (Boyan) with true religious Zionist values. Loved and missed by Ateret Cohanim staff and families.

May he build Jerusalem of the Heavens and may his *neshama* rest in *Gan Eden*."



Orthodox Rabbis Urge Leniency In Child Porn Case

The Albany Orthodox Jewish community was rocked by the sentencing of Michael Isaacson, convicted in federal court on three counts of child pornography charges.

"On March 1, Isaacson admitted that he distributed child pornography files over the Internet," according to Richard Hartunian, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York. "He also admitted to possessing more than 1,000 image files, and more than 30 video files, depicting minors engaged in sexually explicit poses or conduct, some children were less than 12 years of age."

The images were obtained from Internet websites and peer-to-peer file sharing network, according to the indictment. Isaacson was snagged by a law enforcement agent acting in an undercover capacity.

Isaacson, 34, was sentenced on August 1 to five years in a federal penitentiary and 25 years of supervised release. During his incarceration he will be required to participate in the Bureau of Prisons Sex Offender Treatment Program, mental health treatment, and must register as a sex offender, a lifetime societal stigma.

In letters of support from several people from the local Jewish community, including three rabbis, it was revealed Isaacson suffers from ADHD/ADD, Asperger's Syndrome, and unnamed physical maladies.

The three rabbis and several community leaders wrote to U.S. Senior Judge Gary Sharpe that because Isaacson has become an observant Jew since his indictment two years ago, he should be treated leniently during his sentencing. Isaacson's supporters attested that he is kind, gentle, introverted, troubled, and a good person.

"I realize that Michael stands accused of serious criminal internet usage," wrote Rabbi Yisroel Rubin, spiritual leader of Congregation Shomray Torah. "I truly plead that he not be judged too harshly, as he is basically a good person who can be rehabilitated rather than completely crushed."

"I think Michael is a good citizen and a safe, upright productive member of society and deserves a second chance," wrote Rabbi Mendy Mathless. "I hold Michael's character in high regard and hope you would consider a shorter sentence based on who I believe Michael truly is."

"I sincerely believe Michael has learned from his experience and given the proper medication, mental health support, and rehabilitation he will be able to return as a positive member of our community and society," Rabbi Dr. Moshe Bomzer, Isaacson's spiritual advisor and a licensed social worker, wrote in his letter of support.

Addressing Isaacson's incarceration, Rabbi Bomzer requested that the sentence be served at the Fort Dix Federal Correctional Institution in New Jersey.

"It is a facility able to care for his psychiatric needs as well as his religious needs. It is a facility close enough to be visited by clergy (from Lakewood) and volunteer alike and be supported by family and friends."

"Despite Michael's legal and moral aberration, he had been faithfully attending a small Orthodox synagogue in Albany and was attempting to further his understanding and practice of Judaism," wrote Sanford Rosenblum, a respected personal injury attorney from Albany and Monsey, who is closely connected to Rabbis Rubin and Bomzer.

"Fort Dix is only 20 minutes from Lakewood, New Jersey, where there is a thriving Orthodox Jewish community that does significant outreach to nearby Jewish prisoners. We believe that the kind of support Michael is sure to receive from the Lakewood community would not only ease the challenges he faces but may actually allow him to benefit spir-

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