

5835 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1262
BALTIMORE, MD



The Baltimore community is about to
mark an important milestone.

**YOU CAN BE
PART OF IT!**

JOIN US!



30 years
UnitedAsOne
PAYING TRIBUTE TO RABBI YAAKOV HOPFER

This coming year marks an important milestone for Rabbi Yaakov Hopper and the entire Baltimore community.

It's been 30 years since Rabbi Hopper began serving our community, and he has since guided and inspired thousands of individuals in numerous ways.

Rabbi Yaakov Hopper is one of the most respected and beloved Rabbanim in the Baltimore community. As the Morah D'Asrah of Shearith Israel and the President of the Vaad Harabbonim, Rabbi Hopper is a treasured resource that is utilized by every segment of the community. Renowned for his warm demeanor, as well as his breadth and depth of Torah knowledge, Rabbi Hopper has made as much of an impact on the Baltimore community, as the Baltimore community has made on him.

To honor Rabbi Hopper and celebrate his contribution to the Baltimore kehilla, a sefer Torah is being commissioned in his honor.

WE INVITE YOU TO BE
part of this celebration

Q & A with Rabbi Hopper

Rabbi Hopper shares his thoughts on the Baltimore community's many strengths - and the challenges it faces now, and in the future.

Q The Rav has been serving the Baltimore Jewish community for nearly 30 years. What do you think is the community's greatest attraction?

A Baltimore is a community filled with many working professionals who appreciate living a modest lifestyle where Torah and ruchniyus take precedence over gashmius. As a whole, the members of the community, both old-timers and newcomers, appreciate the simplicity of the Baltimore community and the fact that they don't have to give in to outside pressures. Most people don't aspire to build palatial homes; rather, they want to live a meaningful life of Torah where they can work to support their families, pay their mortgage on an affordable house, and live in a cohesive community of like-minded people.

Q & A with Rabbi Hopper

Q Our community is known for its achdus and cohesiveness. To what do you attribute this notable reputation?

A There are many reasons for this wonderful phenomenon. Amongst them is the role of the Rabbanim. Every one of our Rabbanim works very hard to instill in their respective kehillahs the values of honesty, integrity, living a humble and meaningful life, and most importantly, the value of mutual respect bein adam l'chavero. There are about 35 shuls in the community and 4,000 Shomrei Shabbos families. Within these 35 shuls, there is a wide range of Rabbanim with a broad spectrum of hashkafas, yet they all work together seamlessly and keep the community together. I believe that members of the community see the mutual admiration and respect of the Rabbanim and this makes a great impression on people.

Q What do you feel are some of the challenges our community faces?

A Unfortunately, Baltimore is not immune to the same challenges as the rest of the world; for example, the influence of technology, especially on our children. We try our best to keep them happy with a feeling of warmth and love for Torah and mitzvos, but the lure of technology is still a threat.

The greatest challenge to the community as a whole comes from its greatest blessing – growth. As more people choose to settle in Baltimore, we struggle to maintain that special out-of-town feeling and ruach, where everyone feels like they know one another to a certain extent and at least recognize faces in the supermarket. There is a certain feeling of camaraderie in a small town that can sometimes get lost as the population grows. Extra efforts need to be made to ensure that each person feels counted, recognized and needed.

Also, as the community expands, the needs and stresses on the Rabbanim and the mosdos increase as well. The institutions are struggling to keep up with the growing needs of the kehillah. The schools are impacted by this growth with the need to expand and accommodate more students. Baltimore is not an inherently wealthy community. The schools actually depend upon the tuition dollars to help fund the daily operations. This puts a lot of pressure on the parents to pay their large tuition bills, and the stress of these finances often puts a strain on shalom bayis.

Many Rabbanim spend a large part of their day speaking to individuals and families, helping with every aspect of their lives, from shidduchim to shalom bayis to chinuch. Members like knowing that they and their entire family have access to a Rav who knows them all well. Growing membership gives Rabbanim the additional challenge of ensuring each individual receives the attention they need.

Q Who are some of the Rabbanim who have impacted your life?

A There were many. To name a select few, Rav Shisgal, zt"l, who was Rav Moshe Feinstein's son-in-law, Rav Pam, zt"l, Rav Shach, zt"l, and Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l, were all soaring figures in my life. I was inspired by everything they represented. Not only were they great talmidei chachamim who represented the Torah, they also showed me how the Torah really makes a person great. Every person they met, they treated with such respect and dignity. Their ahavas Yisrael made a lasting impression upon me and inspired me to try to emulate their ways.

I was fortunate to have learned under Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz when I learned at the Mir. I arrived three weeks before the start of the Six Day War. Although I had the option to return home, I chose to stay and forged a close connection with the Rav that left me with indelible memories to this day. I also learned in Ponevezh, where I saw firsthand how Rav Shach treated people. He taught me how important it is to be sensitive to others. I try to keep this sensitivity in mind when speaking with every person who comes to me for guidance. I realize that they are not only looking for guidance, they are looking for compassion and someone who really cares. I learned from my many Rebbeim that this is crucial for a community Rav.

united as one

Not Just a

In anticipation of Shearith Israel's
Hachnasas Sefer Torah
this Fall, You're invited to our

STAM EVENT

AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE
FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY!

May 22, 2016

\$5 PER PERSON • \$15 PER FAMILY • UNDER 2 FREE

From New York - Small Wonder Jewish Puppet Theater: Shows at 1 & 4pm
Kosher Petting Zoo by Torah Tails • Make a Wooden Mezuzah
Sefer Torah Ornaments • Write with Ink & Quill • The Making of Tefillin
Torah Themed Sequin Art • Make a Balloon Flag • The History of the Vimple
Find 80 mistakes in the Mezuzah klaf and win a prize!

Watch Chupa being made for our Hachnasas Sefer Torah this September
Chupa will be donated to a Hachnosas Kallah fund in Erez Yisroel after our event.

For more info: sefertorah@sicbaltimore.org