



Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, founder and president of the National Association of Chevra Kadisha, addressing a meeting of *metaharim* of the Chicago Rabbinical Council.



L-R: Rabbi Elchonon Zohn and Rabbi Shaanan Gelman, Rav of Kehilat Chovevei Tzion, addressing the communal gathering, "Conversation for Mortals."

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## Conversation for Mortals in Chicago

The Chicago Rabbinical Council recently hosted Rabbi Elchonon Zohn for a series of events.

Rabbi Zohn is the director of the Vaad HaRabbanim of Queens *chevrah kaddisha*, and founder and president of the National Association of Chevra Kadisha and a renowned authority on Jewish end-of-life issues.

"We brought Rabbi Zohn to Chicago in order to work with our *metaharim* and speak to the community," explained Rabbi Shaanan Gelman, Rav of Kehilat Chovevei Tzion and member of the CRC, who arranged the visit. "Rabbi Zohn is an international authority on these matters, and we wanted to gain from his knowledge and expertise."

Rabbi Zohn first met in Kehilat Chovevei Tzion with the *metaharim* of the CRC, where he presented a refresher course on the proper practices for doing *taharos*. Participants found the three-hour program to be very meaningful, as they reviewed protocols, and learned about new ideas and practices.

The next afternoon, Rabbi Zohn met with the Rabbanim of the CRC at EJ's Pizza Shop. Rabbi Zohn fielded common questions that arise when dealing with funerals, and discussed tips for dealing with families of *niftarim*, dealing with unusual cases, and ideas for circumventing cremation.

Rabbi Gelman remarked, "Cremations are on the rise in the greater Jewish community. According to the most recent statistics, cremations now occur at an alarming 40 percent of Jewish



Fourth-graders at Yeshiva Ohr Boruch/Veitzen Cheder are learning about the *Avodas Yom Kippur* in *Mishnayos Maseches Yoma* (note the diagram of the Beis Hamikdash in the background). After completing the first *perek*, they were *farhered* by the *Menahel*, Rabbi Hillel Mandel, who was impressed by their grasp of the *inyanim*.

deaths in this country. We were provided with guidelines to work with funeral directors and families to try to re-create the proper standard and bring back *kvod hameis* and the laws of *aveilus*."

Following the lunch meeting, the group toured the funeral room at Chicago Jewish Funerals, where the Rabbanim saw the brand-new facility, including the prep room and *mikveh*, and discussed typical *she'eilos* that arise during a *taharah*.

Later in the evening, a community-wide gathering was held, entitled, "A Workshop for Mortals: A Conversation About Preparing for the Inevitable." Some of the topics discussed at this workshop included the role of the Rabbi; picking a *chevrah kaddisha*, funeral home, and cemetery; the *taharah*; burial in Israel; navigating special circumstances; cost

considerations and what can be pre-planned; halachic living wills; leaving instructions for family; and *shivah* and *aveilus*.

The event was partially sponsored by three local funeral homes: Shalom Memorial Funeral Home, Chicago Jewish Funerals, and the Weinstein and Piser Home.

The evening was introduced by Rabbi Zvi Engel, president of the CRC, and moderated by Rabbi Gelman, along with Rabbi Zohn. The discussion focused on crucial end-of-life issues that need to be addressed while one is healthy and able to do so properly.

Rabbi Zohn emphasized the importance of setting up a halachic health-care proxy and discussed different forms of that proxy that are available, as well as the EMES card that can be carried in one's wallet and contains important instructions.

"The participants were engaged, and the question-and-answer session was most helpful," commented Rabbi Gelman. "It was a crucial event. However, it is a shame that these events do not attract the younger crowd, because unfortunately, tragedy does happen, (*lo aleinu*) and it is important for everyone to be informed and prepared. We have to educate the community in these matters early on. Rabbi Zohn served as a pioneer to spread the word and publicize these vital issues."

The Chicago community hopes to participate in a TEAM Shabbos during *Shabbos Parashas Vayechi*, in which shul Rabbanim will raise awareness as to the importance of setting up a halachic living will and other pertinent matters.

## Boyener Rebbe, Shlita, in Chicago

On *Shabbos Parashas Vayetzey*, the Chicago community will be honored to welcome the Boyaner Rebbe, *shlita*, who will visit the community on the occasion of his grandson's bar mitzvah.

The Rebbe will be available to meet with people by appointment on Sunday and Monday, November 26-27. For more information, please call 224-470-0941.

## Rabbi Yosef Mendelevich In Chicago

On *Shabbos Parashas Vayishlach*, December 1-2, Congregation KJBS (Congregation Kehilath Jacob Beth Samuel) will host Rabbi Yosef Mendelevich, the famed refusenik, as scholar-in-residence.

Rabbi Mendelevich will share his inspiring stories about surviv-