

# Yeshivas HaOlim



# ***Shanah Aleph in America***

② The coronavirus pandemic makes it difficult to see how yeshiva high school graduates will be able to go to Israel for *Shanah Aleph* in 2020-2021. We would like to share with you our vision for an American based alternative with a vision and a mission:

② Yeshivas HaOlim

# Our Missions

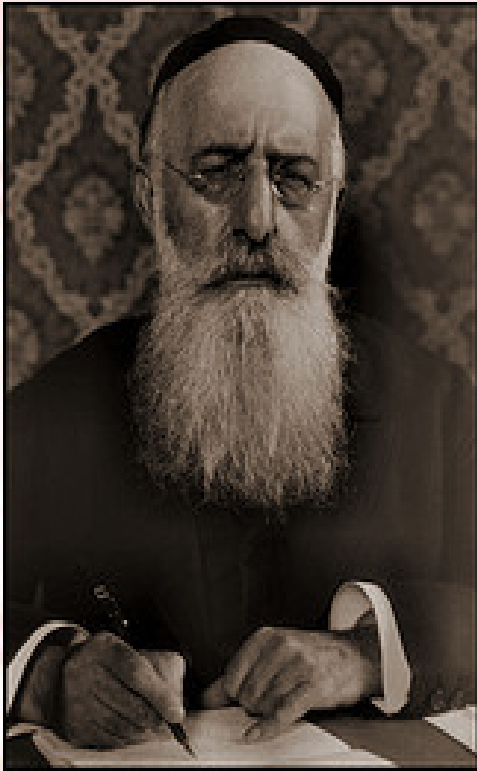
Our mission is to educate and inspire *Bnei Torah*, to holistically imbue the depth and breadth of your life with *Ahavas Torah* and *Yiras Shomayim*, cultivating your drive and ambition for life-long and life-wide *Avodas Hashem*.

Our mission is to facilitate and enable you to serve as models of Torah-true living both amidst *Am Yisroel* and amidst the greater society in which Hashem has destined us to represent Him.

Our mission is to enhance your awareness of our mandate to know Hashem in all the ways of our respective lives – each of which emerges from the unique set of characteristics with which each individual is endowed.

Our mission is to assist you in an individualized manner according to your particular *derech* – to help you identify your specific pathways leading to a meaningful and fulfilling life of *Kiddush Hashem* and *Kavod Shomayim*.

# What's in the name?



Dr. Nathan Birnbaum *zt"l* (371864-1937) was a renowned *Ba'al Teshuvah* who refused to romanticize the Orthodoxy he had embraced. He saw its flaws – and also its potential. He identified the issues, and founded the society of the *Olim* (*HaOlim* – “The Ascenders”) to be in the vanguard of a revitalized and energized group of individuals on a quest for growth and accomplishment. The second world war put an end to these efforts. (Today, the Aishdas Society – [aishdas.org](http://aishdas.org) – attempts to continue on Dr. Birnbaum's path.)

Yeshivas HaOlim is dedicated to that path.

## **A 1927 address by Dr. Birnbaum** **with contemporary notes**

[Organized Orthodoxy] is obliged to come together and create societal tools that will teach: 1. How to deepen our awareness of Hashem out of love for Him [Da'as]. 2. How to dedicate ourselves to love our fellow human beings [Rachamim]. 3. How to pursue modesty [hatznei'a leches] as a manifestation of the glory of our Hashem [Tiferes]...

We must admit that cold intellectualism has penetrated our relationship with Hashem. Following through with that metaphor, Ha'Olim cannot remain at ease with this frigidity. They must toil until within their societies, within each of their groupings and within each of their members there arise divine hislahavus and inner spiritual feeling.

To achieve aliya in Da'as Hashem there float before my eyes [the following ideas]:

Torah study in a more profound manner: Every "Oleh" is required to expand and deepen his knowledge of Torah and Chochmas Yisroel. Before all else, if he does not possess basic knowledge, he must acquire it upon entering the society. The society must constantly supervise its members to ensure that they are fulfilling this obligation. It must provide the opportunity to learn and grow through shiurim that it will conduct within its circle. The society shall campaign among its members, their children and their students to convince them to embark upon a term of study in a yeshiva or under a renowned talmid chacham for one to three years.

[Although this first clause was primarily directed at the German-Jewish milieu for which it was written, it is readily translated to address the crying contemporary need of the day. Good boys, who may do well in other subjects in high school, are often miserable when compelled to learn Gemara. They may have never had a Rebbe who gave them a geshmack in the profound analysis of a Rashi, the minute dissection of a Rambam, the intellectual challenge of a Tosafos, the scientific approach of Reb Chaim, or the philosophical profundity of Reb Shimon. Some yeshivos teach from an axiomatic religious imperative; others from "subject among other subjects" - albeit, under the best circumstances, a "first among equals" - approach bereft of specialness. And so fine talmidim can go through twelve years of traditional Chinuch with but the most fleeting glimpses of the areyvus of Gemara, of its hod v'hadar, of that which makes one exclaim: Ma ahavti Torasecha! Particularly in the T.I.D.E. milieu that Yeshivas HaOlim promotes, a solid one to three years Kodesh la'Hashem out of Simchas HaTorah, is an essential cornerstone for life-long exciting and uplifting pursuit of Talmud Torah k'neged kullam.

2. Festive gatherings of *Charedim*, for spiritual purposes (such as the introduction of the Eastern European *Shalosh Seudos*, etc.).

3. Special instruction in the history and development of *Hislavus* and *Dveykus* in Israel and its practice.

[The davening in many contemporary yeshivos needs improvement. In some places, there is somewhat more of a sense of *tzurah*, of decorum. But *ha'tzad ha'shaveh* is that for all too many *talmidim*, davening is "down-time" - for shmoozing, at best for sleeping and/or sleeping. Yeshivas HaOlim will strive to make davening meaningful and uplifting, and to ensure a *talmid* is not just "acting," but knows and means what he is saying. This can be accomplished by *shiurim* and *va'adim* in *Emunah*, in the power of davening, and *biurei tefillos*.]

4. Great emphasis must be placed upon a stipulation that every *Oleh* to refrain from any **excesses or immodesty** in speech, clothing, deed and from any **competitive sport or gambling**.

5. The development of a pure esthetic that will free the architecture of our *Shuls* and the nature of our music from the influence of other religions...

To achieve *aliya in bein adam l'chaveiro* I consider:

1. Instruction in the issues of *bein adam l'chaveiro* and guidance in expanded practical applications. Both modern and classic texts should be employed, with a particular stress on current situations. To develop a greater sense of belonging to Orthodox society as a whole. 2. The obligation of every *Oleh* to engage in *Cheshbon HaNefesh* at least once a week, to ascertain if, and to what extent, he has fulfilled *mitzvos* and refrained from *aveiros* according to the instruction and guidance provided to him.

3. An outright ban on certain material pursuits.

4. Substantive and apolitical common counsel to resolve Jewish societal problems in the spirit of Torah and *Mesorah*. Even if the manner in which we display the public image of our lives does not currently convey our glory as the Chosen Nation, even if we are uncertain how to properly become the glory [*pe'er*] of the world, *Ha'Olim* cannot allow the status quo to continue. They must attempt to rectify as much as possible.



To achieve aliya in the manners of creating public lives, I depict to myself:

1. Instruction in issues concerning glory [Tiferes] and its correlation to religion and Mussar... [and] practical guidance in the application of these principles to the creation of appropriate public lives.
2. The development of an independent Jewish social structure following Judaism and Mussar.
3. The development of arts, especially architecture, music and poetry, rooted in the spirit of true Jewish Mesorah, and the establishment of competitions in these areas.
4. The previously mentioned (in the section on Da'as Hashem) ban on excesses.

[The Internet is here to stay. There is no way the bulk of Yahadus HaTorah can hide their collective heads in the sand. And if that means that a bachur today – even a “good” bachur – is exposed to pornography, we have to deal with it. If it means they will be texting constantly, acting inappropriately on blogs and on Facebook, we also have to deal with it. Many of our talmidim are into “goyishe music,” are up on TV and movies (even if we have no TV’s in our houses! even if we have extensive web filters – amazing, right?! Are you aware, for example, of the existence of a site called [bahalt.com](http://bahalt.com)? – check it out!!). So we have to deal with it. Moreover, but we have hid our faces to our detriment for far too long from the problem that many bachurim with the prohibited behavior that we can delicately call ni’uf b’yad. So we must deal with it. Part of the problem is that many of our talmidim find a certain sippuk in these pursuits that we are not giving them (in no small part because 75 years ago we failed to implement the vision of Dr. Nathan Birnbaum). Yeshivas HaOlim will deal with it. (This is not the place to explain how, od chazaon la’mo’ed.)]

As a means of ascent in all three aforementioned areas I consider:

Involvement in the education of young men and young women according to the demands of Ha’Olim - an involvement that will become especially substantial when it will be possible to arrange such education among large groups of Ha’Olim or in their respective communities...

[ Maharal, Be’er Ha’Golah, end of Be’er 7 (free translation):

When an individual does not intend to scoff - rather only to state his belief - even if these positions stand against your belief and system, don’t say to him: “Don’t talk, seal your mouth!” For then the system will not be clarified. On the contrary, in such matters we should say: “Speak as much as you want, all that you want to say, so that you will not be able to say that were you granted permission to expand you would have spoken further and convinced me with your beliefs.” If, however, you do close the questioner’s mouth and prevent him from speaking, that points toward a weakness in the system. This approach is the converse of the general impression, which is that it is not permitted to discuss the system, and that thus the system is strengthened. On the contrary! That approach undermines the system!... It is only by inviting questioning that a person comes to the inner truth of matters... For any hero that comes to compete with another to demonstrate his might wants very much that his opponent muster as much strength as possible - then, if the hero overcomes his opponent, he proves that he is the mightier hero. What might, however, does the hero display if his opponent, being introduced, is not permitted to stand strong and wage war against him?...]

## One of Yeshivas HaOlim's other heroes:



One of the co-founders of *HaOlim* was the great Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Kaplan *zt"l* (1890-1924). In his most famous essay, *B'Tkvos HaYirah*, the following lines appear:

Oh *Hashem Elokim*! Who would grant that we would for a moment forget this oppressing thought: That everything has happened before, thousands upon thousands of time. That the great ones have already spoken, and that the small ones have already closed their ears. That all was without benefit, without blessing... that nothing can fix distorted hearts, that there is no escape from twisted concepts. Who would grant that we would for a moment forget this!...

In forgetting this smallness we would suddenly remember greatness. In destroying this despair we would suddenly renew souls. Evil would dissipate. Stupidity would dissipate. Surely a bridge would be built between man and his brother, a ladder would rise between Earth and Heaven.

A moment... Yes, that is what I said: "That they would forget for a moment!" **For greater is the glory of one short moment than vast stretches of time enwrapped in desolation. What a moment can achieve years cannot...**

Let us not wait [for this moment] till we come to shame... If it does not exist, let us create it...

"If the *tzaddikim* desire, they can create worlds" - if they desire...

It is told about the *Gr"a zt"l* that anyone who overheard him at the time of *Kabbolas Shabbos* saying: "Today, if you listen to His voice," would immediately become a *Ba'al Teshuva*.

Today! This moment! Immediately - and eternally.

But when will this moment come? When will it be sought? When will it be found? In every generation they ask this same question, and every generation answers with greater despair than its predecessors: "Who knows?"

But one [truth] I know! This response can only suffice for all Mankind, or for Israel as a whole. For an individual, the specific person who sits and writes or reads these simple lines, can he respond any other way to the question "when?" than with the reply of Hillel: "If not now... when?"

Now. Immediately. For now - and for all generations...



## **So, what's the bottom line?**

Thus, the purpose of Yeshivas HaOlim is to empower a new generation to be enriched by the full scope of our rich heritage. Yeshivas HaOlim will encourage and urge its students to ask any and all questions, affording its *talmidim* an honest and open approach to the full breadth and depth of Torah and *Yahadus*. The *Roshei Yeshiva* of Yeshivas HaOlim, Rabbi Avrohom Kivelevitz *shlita* and Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer *shlita*, are fully capable of such a novel pedagogical approach, as their breadth and depth of both Torah and secular knowledge are truly spectacular. Yeshivas HaOlim strives to emulate the call of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch *zt"l*: “Everything that you think and feel, everything that you strive for and desire, and everything that you possess, shall be unto you only the means to, only have value to you, for getting nearer to G-d, for bringing G-d near to you.

Yeshivas HaOlim hopes to serve the population in the vicinity of the Greater New York City area west of the Hudson river, the young men attending colleges in the Northern and Central New Jersey areas. The Yeshiva will be located in a location convenient for this population.

The Yeshiva will have three self-contained *Sedarim*: Morning, Afternoon and Evening. A *talmid* can join the Yeshiva for one, two or even three *Sedarim*, depending on his availability. Each *Seder* will be holistic in its curriculum, consisting of *chevrusa* learning and *shiur* in Gemara, practical Halacha, and Mussar and Machashava. Thus, each *Seder* will be a complete Yeshiva in microcosm – the fewer moments that can sometimes impact more qualitatively than the vaster amount of time that all too often remains desolate.

Please contact us for information!

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