



the gesher foundation

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Mozaei Shabbat, Sept. 11, 1971

Dear All,

Its been a while since I've written and seen cabinet members and I have quite a bit to report:

1. On Monday Yaakov, Chanan, a few selected madrichim and I sat down for a six hour meeting (to be continued this Tuesday) reviewing the summer seminars and planning coming steps. It was a very healthy and important meeting and a few small but significant changes will be made in the future seminars as a result.

2. On Friday we met once again with the architect Shaked. All final changes were made and now he's beginning the drawing. Since Moshko is still in England and a final choice of a site cannot be made, Shaked will not draw the exact institution but something more or less similar to what he has in mind. Should be ready in 2 weeks.

3. Now a very important item: There have been two developments which have ~~separately~~ combined to point a slightly new, but very exciting direction for Geshher:

a) We have spoken of Geshher thusfar as a program to foster unity within Israel, with the stress on the dati-lo dati problem. However, in recent months the Sefardic-Ashkenazic scism, or better the economic class differences which run roughly along "racial" lines has erupted into a major crisis. Now this issue is very interrelated with the dati problem for many reasons and you can no more speak of unity while ignoring this issue. In addition, a great deal of \$\$ is being allocated, ~~few~~, and in long range terms a great more will be, for work in this area. We must get involved.

b) Geshher was formed to change attitudes. Theoretically, it would be better to run scores of seminars, each time for new people. However, the seminar kids refuse to let us do this. In 2 recent meetings with the kids we have heard bitter cries that we are ignoring the veterans in favor of expansion. Their claim is that we cannot ignite a new dimension in their life and immediately abandon them. They are right. Willy-nilly, like it or not, Geshher is slowly developing into a youth movement on the line of NCSY. However, to do this properly 2 things must be done: 1. We must involve the kids in projects, i.e. ^{programs} give them Geshher jobs to do. We must develop programs to serve them and ^{to} make use of them. 2. We must do something to erase the "missionary" image which the movement ~~is~~ is likely to develop. We must keep it Jewish, traditional, even religious but not missionary.

Yaakov and myself conceived of an idea to solve both matters in a single blow. Geshher is to be expanded slowly into a youth movement. There will be Chugim, seminars, Shabbatons for the Geshher kids. They will receive--but they will also have to give. They will have to give expression to their newly discovered value system not only by adopting isolated mitzvot like Kiddush, Tefillin, etc. They will have to help others, i.e. be gomlei Chassadim. The idea is very simple: We want to set up Geshher moadonim not in wealthy neighborhoods (where our kids generally come from)

to reconcile brother with brother through the heritage of their fathers

but in socio-economically depressed neighborhoods. Our kids will come here certain times for their own programs (e.g. chugim) and certain times to run projects for the neighborhood kids. We will provide free tutoring, remedial reading help, etc--all to be administered by the Gesher kids. They're not pros but with some direction I feel certain that if run properly they will be able to contribute significantly.

On Wednesday we met with Dr. Yisroel Peled, the mayor of Ramat Gan (who visited our last ^{and} seminar if you remember). Peled was quite impressed with our work and very excited about our idea. Ramat Gan is a rather wealthy community and has only one slum of significance- Ramot Amidar. And it just so happens that in Ramot Amidar is a moadon which the city built for B'nai Akiva but which has been abandoned for quite a while. Peled ~~said~~ said that he will immediately serve notice to Bnai Akiva that unless they rejuvenate their moadon within a month he will give it away to someone else. It is very unlikely that they will be able to make use of it since they hardly have use for their new IL500,000 building elsewhere in Ramat Gan. In addition, they undoubtedly figure that Peled is bluffing--who would want a moadon in a place like Ramot Amidar? It therefore looks like we'll be getting it but please--tell no one about it until the month period is officially over. If Bnai Akiva gets wind of our plans they may stall, etc.

Yaakov and I visited the moadon. It was locked but is a solid, modern building with a basketball court up front. It is also only about 200-300 yards from Bar Ilan Univ--we might therefore try to get their dept of Sociology involved in the project, to provide guidance, etc. Also, Bob Asch, who is the national supervisor of psychological clinics for Misrad hachinuch, has offered his personal assistance and will get the Ramat Gan clinic to cooperate with us.

I don't want to count our chickens before they hatch but we may be taking a giant step forward.

4. Now to leave this ^Rtopic and return to other developments: I met with Rav Aaron Lichtenstein this week and it looks like he will be the central figure in our machon for the coming year. This will add quite a bit of prestige to the machon.

5. We are planning a massive Yom Iyun in the Boyar H.S., Jerusalem, on Erev Shabbat Shuva. I am rounding up 25 volunteer madricim for the event and will send you details as they become available.

6. Regarding the music festival. Baruch Chait and I tried on a number of ~~e-these~~ occasions to meet with Stanley Sperber of Zamir to discuss the festival. For various reasons it never worked out. If you plan to go thru with it you must get some musical personality to run it for you. Stanley is back in the States but he told Baruch that he has no time for this. Baruch says he's the best man--but very expensive. Perhaps meet with him there if only for advice on whom to take on. Also if you do not line up a person ^{by} the end of Sukkot- forget about it. You'll never pull it off this year. Requires a minimum of 6-8 months preparation.

Thats it. A ^{לחיים טובים} to you all.

L'hitraot,

Danny