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Ami Magazine
P: 718.534.8800
F: 718.484.7731
info@amimagazine.org

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LETTERS

WHAT MISASKIM REALLY MEANS

A bereaved father describes

In reference to "Finding Light in Darkness,"
Issue 328

Dear Editor:

We are reserved individuals who relish our discreet lives and go about our business in an unassuming way and shun publicity.

However, man does not control his destiny and as our forefather Yaakov discovered when he sought to settle in peace, so, too, did we lose our Yosef (Yosef Shmuel), except that our son won't be returning in 22 years as a viceroy in Egypt.

As an unfortunate protagonist of your feature article on the Misaskim organization, I feel duty-bound to share with your readership details that were omitted in your exposé.

When Hatzalah appeared at our door to inform us of the bitter news that fateful Thursday evening, Yanky Meyer slipped into our house, and like a well-oiled machine, he followed a script that he must have performed countless times before.

The first order of business was to identify the immediate next of kin and close family and dispatch social workers accompanied by Hatzalah members to inform them of the tragedy before they get the news from social media.

The next order of business was to get nearby relatives and family friends into the house to support those of us at home. Then it was necessary to bring our 12-year-old

son and the grandparents home from the camp and country in the Catskills in the company of Hatzalah members.

One of our married sons was in the air, en-route to Los Angeles with his three infants, and they had to be located, informed, and turned around in LAX, and passage had to be secured for them in sufficient time to make it home for what we hoped would be a Friday morning *levayah*.

Yanky Meyer and the Misaskim organization arranged all that from our dining room table in record time, while allowing us to absorb the shock of our loss with the utmost sensitivity to our privacy.

They were in touch with the Canadian *askanim* on the scene throughout the night, and when it became apparent that the authorities would not release our son for burial immediately, Yanky went into overdrive and got in touch with the multitudes of politicians and bureaucrats that he has worked with before and remained one step ahead of the forensic investigators and medical examiner.

Misaskim pulled a trick out of their hat and had a medical examiner from a US jurisdiction guide the Canadians on how to deal with the conflicting agendas of *kavod haniftar* and their legal mandates. They were successful in obtaining a stay, and the

AMI MAGAZINE
1575 50th St., Brooklyn, NY 11219
letters@amimagazine.org
Phone: 718-534-8800
Fax: 718-484-7731

Q I'm mainstreaming my child from a special ed setting to a general ed school. **What are some pointers to consider?**

email your question to letstalk@encoresupport.org



Answered by **Hannah Hoch PHD, BCBA-D**
Encore ABA Supervisor on EncoreSupport.org



LETTERS

coroner's office did step back and agreed to do non-invasive imaging and toxicology labs as opposed to following their strict protocol.

It is important for the readers to be aware that this didn't occur on terra firma in New York where the *askanim* have long-established connections. This was unfamiliar territory: Misaskim was dealing with suburban Quebec officials who in their entire careers haven't worked from Friday 4:30 p.m. until Monday 9 a.m., and all of a sudden they were getting calls from the governors of New York and New Jersey on their private cell phones after hours.

The Canadians took this case very seriously, as I heard from the top health ministry official of Quebec myself, on a conference call: "We have an obligation to society and to this young man in particular to find out why this healthy young boy died, and we will fight you in court at every level to fulfill our obligation. If you continue to fight us, this may not be resolved for months, perhaps a year."

Yanky Meyer and his colleagues Yanky Landau and Mr. Wiel, accompanied me to my *rav* and explained every detail to the leading *rabbanim* with whom my *rav* consulted.

Misaskim retained a Canadian law firm and Yanky Meyer ordered the stunned lead attorney: "Get on the phone with so and so, the attorney for the local Muslim activists, and consult with him. Ask him what his *modus operandi* would be in this situation."

The response came back: "Oh, we follow your guy; he's got a much better track record than we do."

At some point on Friday, Misaskim also contracted a private airplane that was sent with my eldest son to pick up the remains, at the moment that there was a chance that the Quebec health ministry would accede and accept the medical theory submitted by a prominent sympathetic *frum* doctor to get our son released.

Dear readers, what I learned in the five days that Misaskim was ensconced in my house, was that you only know a portion of what Misaskim does because they are highly sensitive to *kavod hameis* and the family's dignity.

Baruch Hashem, in our case, there is no cloud: Shmuly passed away in a *yeshivah* camp while his Gemara was open on the table.

Misaskim is called to duty in many less dignified instances where violence—self-inflicted or otherwise—is a concern. Remains of suicide victims, crib deaths, absentee parents and runaway teens are discovered and must be hastily and discreetly repatriated many a time. These cases are unfortunately not uncommon and cost thousands of dollars to resolve quietly and expeditiously. Yet it is done discreetly without the awareness of the public at large, to the financial detriment of the organization.

After all, an appeal for chairs and water-coolers is much less poignant than the triumph of Misaskim against overzealous coroners.

To me, Misaskim is no longer about tables and chairs...and now you know the rest of the story!

Herschel Friedman

HAPPY CAMPER Kudos for a Lunchbreak profile

In reference to Lunchbreak, Issue 324

Dear Editor:

What a great choice to feature Moe Mernick in your Lunchbreak column! My family has already purchased his book and we were all so excited to read about him in your magazine. He is truly an amazing person and a great inspiration!

We first met Moe when he was our son's counselor in Camp HASC. Despite his stutter, or as it was so eloquently explained by his wife, perhaps BECAUSE of his stutter, he was one of the most exuberant, understanding, caring, kind and compassionate counselors we have encountered over the years! He was always one of the first to run over to greet us with his boundless energy and great smile to give us a glowing report about how the summer was going. Although there was no mention of his time in HASC, we hope this was a happy *tekufah* for him. He certainly made a tremendous impact on so many of us, campers and parents alike!

Moe, we don't know if you remember us, but we certainly remember you with tremendous awe and admiration!

We wish you continued *siyata di'shmaya* and *hatzlachah* in all your endeavors.

Gavriel's family

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