Marking a Milestone
By Dr. Yitzchok Levine
Department of Mathematical Sciences
Stevens Institute of Technology
Holbrook, NJ
levine@stevens.edu

The Mesivta of Bayswater has been evicted from its present location. The Mesivta of Bayswater, under the leadership of its rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Michael Mansour, has had a tremendous impact on its talmidim in the few years since its inception. Unfortunately, however, some members of the New York City building inspection department don’t seem to be cognizant of the tremendous service that the Mesivta provides for bochurim and the positive impact that it has had on the entire community of Bay- water/Far Rockaway.

In one fell swoop, in the middle of an animated morning seder, while the bo-
churim were seated and had engaged in in-depth learning, the building inspectors arrived and declared the bais medrash building and the dormitory building across the street to be structures that must be vacated immediately.

Where will the yeshiva go? Where will the talented and dedicated rabbeim pick up where they left off and once again impart Torah and yiras hashem to the excellent cadre of bochurim who so desire to learn?

An amazing amount of siyata diSh-
mayaya and the concerted efforts of the Mesivta’s many devoted friends in Bay- water and beyond enabled it to resume sedorim the very same day. The rav of the Young Israel of Wavecrest and Bays- water, Rabbi Eliezer Feuer, and its president, Hillel Adelman, opened their shuls’ doors to serve as the Mesivta’s temporary new home during this trying period. Rabbi Shmuryahu Weinberg of K’hal Chesed V’Emes, along with his baalei batin, made his shul available for the Mesivta’s daily tefillos and seudos on Shabbos. Nis- sim Isaacson, a driving force behind the shul, urged Rabbi Mansour to consider the shul like his very own home.

Numerous batei batin, many of whom have been supporters of the Mesivta since its inception, stepped forward to provide invaluable assistance. Steve Odzer was quick to order new tables and bookcases for the Mesivta’s temporary quarters, insisting that the bochurim be as comfort- able as they were before their sudden dis- location. Michael Edery of Cedarhurst, who has a daily morning seder in the Mesivta and has been deeply impressed by its ruach of vormkeit and huzmada, took numerous hours out of his workday to assist in the logistics of the Mesivta’s relocation.

With the Mesivta back in operation for the short term and the kol Torah re- verberating once more, the rosh yeshiva’s attention has turned to seeing to it that the return “home” is as speedy and painless as possible. Like many other mosdos, the Mesivta has been hard hit by the current economic downturn. The significant expense of renovations

Mesivta of Bayswater Evicted from its Home

In 1995, the Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer Foundation undertook the publication of a new English edition of the Hirsch Chumash. Rav Breuer z”l had urged that a new English edition of the Hirsch Chumash be prepared to accommodate modern English usage. It was felt that, despite the enormous contribution of the Levy edition to the world of Torah learning, the style of English used was demanding one for current and future genera-
tions. As Dr. Levy wrote in his introduction, his work was intended as a literal translation of the German. Rav Hirsch’s style of writing presents a formidable challenge for translation into an English format that is easily read... In the current edition, the Foundation has sought to present to the English-speaking public a new work that is a faithful rendering of the Hirsch Chumash.

It has taken twelve long years to complete this new translation. Each and every one of us should be grateful to know that the new translation of Rav Hirsch’s commentary on the Chumash is now complete. As a result, the insights of Rav Hirsch are accessible to all of us—scholar and layman.

Some reading this may think, “Very nice, but what does this have to do with me?” I am not a following of Rav Hirsch’s Torah Im Derech Eretz philosophy.” How-
ever, Rav Elyahu Meir Klugman, a grandson of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, held a siyum of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, Published by ArtScroll, points out the following:

“Clear knowledge and understanding of Rav Hirsch’s views, instead of deficient interpretations that can help one respond intelligently to most issues in Orthodox Jewish life. From Bnei Brak and Lakewood to Teenspeak and Woodmere, from FFB to baal teshuvah, from Chazon Ish to modern Ortho-
dox Jew, Rav Hirsch’s teachings form an integral part of the worldview of the Torah Jew in the modern world, regard-
less of whether one takes an active role in that world or not.”

THE EVENT
On Sunday, 18 Kislev/December 14, the Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer Foundation, with the participation of the descendents of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, held a siyum/dinner to mark the completion of the new English edition of the Hirsch Chumash.

This siyum/dinner was attended by more than 400 people. Most were descend-
ents of Rav Hirsch’s ten children. I am sure that Rav Hirsch would have been most grateful to see that his descendents include roshrei yeshiva, distinguished rab-
bonim, accomplished professionals and businesspeople together with their wives and families. It was truly an impressive site to behold.

Dr. Elliott Bondi, a grandson of Rav Breuer, welcomed the participants. Rabbi Moshe Katzzenstein then delivered some remarks on behalf of the descendents of Rav Hirsch. Shortly thereafter, a DVD recording was shown in which the audience received divrei bracha from Rav Yaakov Perlow, the Novominsker Rebbe.

Rav Nosson Scherman, General Editor of ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications, then introduced the keynote speaker, Rabbi Abraham J. Twerksi, MD. Rabbi Twerksi spoke about “The Timeliness of Rav S. R. Hirsch.”

He began by pointing out that despite the fact that his background is Chassidic (his mother was a sister of the third Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Halberstam z”l), he considers himself a “chossid” of Rav Hirsch. “Hardly a day goes by when I do not read from Rav Hirsch’s From the Wisdom of Mischei,” he said, holding up a well-worn copy of this sefer.

“Rav Hirsch changed the way I say Shema.” He told the audience. He then went on to summarize Rav Hirsch’s explanation of Shema that he wrote on Devorim 6:4.

Dr. Twerksi pointed out that Rav Hirsch was a man who knew how to confront and solve the very different problems faced by German Jewry during the 19th century. He told us that Rav Binneler had dealt with these complexities with brilliance and had saved German Orthodoxy. “We also face overwhelming problems today. Where is Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch today? We need him today as well!”

The final speaker of the evening was Rabbi Yaakov Feldheim of Feldheim Pub-
lishers, who had come from Eretz Yisroel to attend this event. “It is worthwhile to have come all the way from Eretz Yisroel just to witness this illustrious assem-
bly,” he said. He then pointed out that his father, Philip Feldheim z”l, enjoyed a close relationship with Rav Breuer and, at the suggestion of Rav Breuer, had be-
gun publishing translations of the works of Rav Hirsch in the late 40s.

The completion of the publication of the new translation of Rav Hirsch’s com-
mentary to the Chumash is indeed an impor-
tant milestone for Jewry.

(Endnotes)
2 The first translation of Rav Hirsch’s commentary from the original German into English was done by Dr. Isaac Levy z”l of London, a grandson of Rav Hirsch. The first edition of this translation was published as individual volumes between 1956 and 1962.