

## BALTIMORE CLARIFICATIONS

### TO THE EDITOR:

In your *Parashas Lech Lecha*/October 28 article on Rabbi Moshe Heinemann and the Baltimore Jewish community, you wrote that Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim Talmudical Academy of Baltimore “was founded in 1917 by Rabbi Avraham Nachman Schwartz, zt”l .... The yeshiva was the third Jewish day school in the United States and the first one outside of New York.” The article listed Harav Mordechai Gifter, zt”l, and Harav Avigdor Miller, zt”l, among the school’s distinguished alumni.

Neither Rav Gifter nor Rav Miller attended the elementary school that Rav Schwartz founded. Rav Miller was born in 1908 and went to public school. (He was too old to enroll in the first elementary class of TA in 1917.) Rav Miller did learn in the afternoons with Rabbi Chayim Eliezer Samson, who served as TA’s *menahel* for fifty years. He was joined by Rav Yehudah Davis (1907–1997), zt”l, who founded Yeshivas Zichron Meir, now located in Mountindale, as well as others.

Rav Gifter, who was born in 1916, could have attended TA but did not. TA was known as the Baltimore Parochial Hebrew School in its early years. This name reflected to some extent a split within the Baltimore Jewish community. Believe it or not, during the first part of the twentieth century there were many Jews who were opposed to yeshivos that provided religious and secular education; they considered such institutions either un-American or inferior to public schools — or both.

Rav Gifter’s uncle, Rabbi Samuel L. (Yehudah Leib) Sar, was then head of the afternoon Talmud Torahs in Baltimore. It would not have “looked right” for his nephew to attend the Baltimore Parochial Hebrew School. Instead, Rav Gifter went to public school and attended Talmud Torah in the afternoon. At the age of twelve, he went to New York to study in the yeshiva high school that Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel, z”l, of RIETS, had founded.

In addition, TA was not the first day school to be founded in Baltimore. There was a day school under the auspices of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in the 1840s and 1850s. Rabbi Avraham Rice (1800/02–1862), the first Orthodox Rav to settle in America, became the Rav of this congregation in 1840 and was instrumental in the founding of this school. In the book *Life, Letters, and Addresses of Aaron Friedenwald, M.D.*, by his son, Harry Friedenwald, M. D. (The Lord Baltimore Press: 1906), the author writes: “[Dr. Aaron Friedenwald] attended the school maintained by the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation... Among his first teachers was an Irishman named Ross .... His [religious] instructors were Mr. Weil, Mr. Dannenberg, Mr. Sachs, and later on, Reverend Dr. Henry Hochheimer, who, soon after his arrival in this country, prepared my father for the [bar mitzva] ceremony and introduced him to the study of Rashi’s Biblical commentary. He early acquired for the study of Hebrew a love which he retained throughout his life. He was an apt scholar, and in later years looked back to his school days as pleasant memories (p. 22).”

Thus we see that in the 1840s and 1850s, Dr. Aaron Friedenwald (1836–1902) attended a school in Baltimore that combined religious and secular studies.

I have no doubt his attendance at this school was responsible for the fact that he remained an observant Jew all his life, something quite rare for professionals born in America during the nineteenth century.

Of course, this congregational day school existed long before the two New York day schools referred to in the article — Etz Chaim and the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School.

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### AUTHOR’S RESPONSE:

Thank you for your insightful comments.

While writing articles of this type, I include information gleaned from oral interviews or printed material from various institutions and organizations. Understandably, these might contain erroneous data, so I appreciate hearing from knowledgeable readers who submit corrections.

In regard to whether or not TA was the first school of its kind, that was my error. The sentence should have stated more accurately, “At the time that it opened, the yeshiva was the only one of its kind outside of New York.”

## CANDYMAN MEMORIES

### TO THE EDITOR:

In “A Sweet Tradition” in the Sukkos/September 30 issue, you wrote about the “candy men” who distribute sweets to children on Shabbos and on Simchas Torah. The answers to the interview questions showed a desire to educate, to bring out *middos* in

children. I would add that just bringing smiles and sparkles to the eyes of children should be enough.

The only problem I see is the health issue. Children should also take care of their teeth.

In the shul where I *daven*, Agudath Israel of Edison/Highland Park, in N.J., the position of “Candy Man” is auctioned once a year. Reb Moshe Feuer, who holds the position, wouldn’t want to give it up! Good for him.

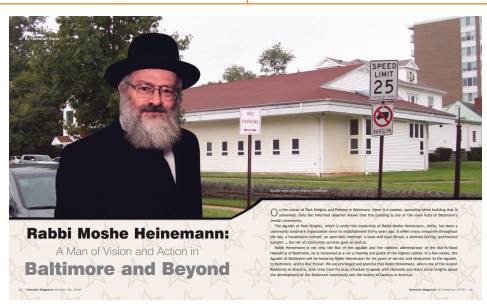
Others, unofficially, join the ranks of “Candy Men.”

The topic of “Candy Man” brought back to me memories of my youth, in Paris, France. There was no “Candy Man,” but a man who came around shul with aromatic tobacco, to elicit sneezes. He would go around, in the famous 10 Rue Pavée Shul (Agudas Hakehilos Synagogue), saying “*shmek tabak*.” In return for his “gift” you had to wish him a *gut Shabbos*. As a little kid, going with my grandfather, Reb Pinhas Gluck, a *gabbai* in that shul, I tried a few times. I wouldn’t say it was enjoyable, but kids want to be like adults ....

I don’t miss the tobacco or the sneezes, but rather the exchange with another Jew just for the sake of good wishes, a *gut Shabbos*.

Perhaps it’s even better that no exchange takes places, but the wishes are still expressed.

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