

## Jews in Small-Town America

■ Just wanted to let you know how much my family and I enjoyed the summer issue of *Jewish Action*. The personal stories and reflections reminded me of the years I spent raising my children in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, under the leadership of Rabbi Benjamin and Shevi Yudin. They are models of true religious life who deeply affected my children. I believe my children became better people and *frum* Jews as a result of growing up in our “small town.” My family and I developed tolerance and compassion for all people as a result of our Fair Lawn experiences. In addition, as expressed in so many of the stories in the magazine, we all benefited from living in a caring shul community. We learned to help others in times of need, to share the *semachot* of our friends and neighbors and to work together for the community. These experiences have molded the lives of every member of my family and will stay with us regardless of where we live.

We always look forward to receiving *Jewish Action*. Kudos for an especially wonderful edition!

**Doris Brandstatter**  
Fair Lawn, New Jersey

As a “west of the Hudson” OU board member, I was pleased to see space devoted to “out of town” in your summer issue. I particularly liked Daniel Alter’s article (“Life West of the Hudson”) because it provides a fairly balanced view of some of the advantages and disadvantages of living outside the New York area.

Rabbi Alter points out that people who decide to live in smaller communities oftentimes do so to improve their

Jewish lives. Moving gives them the opportunity to be more involved in community matters and *kiruv* and enables their children to grow up in less hectic and competitive surroundings. I have also seen people move in the other direction, from “out of town” to New York, to improve their Jewish lives. They give up promising careers and community status to move to a place where they earn less and are just one of the crowd. But they want their children to have the best *chinuch*, and they want to live in an area with an Orthodox critical mass.

What is key is basing a decision about where to live on Jewish values. Those who live in New York should stop for a moment and consider why they live there. I am sure most would come to the conclusion that it is a good place to live Jewishly. But thinking about it and reaching that conclusion may make them feel better when they are stuck on the Palisades on the way to a weeknight wedding in Monsey.

This reminds me of something the Chofetz Chaim once said: “We all know that when a person ate a piece of manna, it tasted like whatever he was imagining at the time. What if he wasn’t thinking of anything while he was eating—how did it taste then?” The Chofetz Chaim paused and continued, “When a person doesn’t think, things have no *ta’am* [purpose].”

**Eli Genauer**  
Seattle, Washington

## Doing the Daf

■ In “Doing the Daf” (summer 2005), Yitzchok Adlerstein highlights several popular Daf Yomi web sites but seems to have missed the one ranked

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number one by Yahoo and Google when searching for “Daf Yomi,” and which has been around for over seven years: [www.dafyomi.org](http://www.dafyomi.org). In fact, the web site name was included in the article’s graphic depicting [shaspod.com](http://shaspod.com), because ShasPod acknowledges that its entire audio content, Daf Yomi *shiurim* by Rabbi Dovid Grossman, comes from [dafyomi.org](http://dafyomi.org). The article goes on to mention that [e-daf.com](http://e-daf.com) also provides Rabbi Grossman’s *shiurim*. Not surprisingly, this is supplied via links to [dafyomi.org](http://dafyomi.org) as well. It took volunteers three years to encode the seven-and-a-half years’ worth of taped *shiurim*.

Dafyomi.org is the only web site to date offering free English-audio *shiurim* on the entire *Shas* for both online streaming and download. There is no advertising, nor are there gimmicks or fees. Just as we share Rabbi Grossman’s audio *shiurim* with [e-daf.com](http://e-daf.com), it shares its images with us, so you can learn the *daf* with text and audio on either site. The purpose is to enable people to learn Hashem’s Torah, nothing else. Dafyomi.org offers audio downloads so you can take the *shiurim* with you on your MP3 player. Though not the same as a live *shiur*, which permits interaction, people have used these *shiurim* over the years to learn all of *Shas*. *Shiurim* on Mishnah, *parashah* and holidays are recent additions.

**David Hirschorn**  
**Webmaster of Dafyomi.org**  
**Elizabeth, New Jersey**

## Of Brides and Grooms

■ In Ari Z. Zivotofsky’s article “What’s the Truth about ... a *Chatan* and *Kallah* Not Seeing Each Other before the Wedding?” (summer 2005), Rabbi Moshe Feinstein is reported to have dismissed the custom of a bride and groom not seeing each other as having no basis. I had a different experience. When I was engaged, my *kallah*, my parents, my future father-in-law, *a’h*, and I visited Rav Moshe. My father-in-law asked the *rav* about my not seeing my *kallah* before the wedding. His response was that we should

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not see each other for a week before the wedding. Rav Moshe’s exact words (or very close to them) were: “*Mehr glatt oyb zei volt in gansen nisht gezehn, aber chatch a voch,*” which can be loosely translated as “[It would be] better if they didn’t see each other at all, but certainly for one week [before the wedding].” I then asked if we could speak by phone, and he said that we could.

**Jacob Suslovich**  
**Brooklyn, New York**

## Rabbi Zivotofsky responds

I am unaware of any written opinion of Rav Moshe Feinstein on this topic. Thus, we can only deduce his opinion from anecdotal evidence, and I am therefore grateful to Mr. Suslovich for sharing his story. One more story is worth noting as it involves Rav Moshe’s family.

Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler married Rav Moshe’s daughter on a Tuesday night. The *aufruf* was held in Rabbi Tendler’s father’s shul on the Shabbat immediately preceding the wedding. As Rabbi Tendler described it to me last July, this was in the days before caterers,

and the *kallah* attended the *aufruf* and helped serve the guests, including Rabbi Tendler, the *chatan*.

## HODS Advertisement

■ An ad placed in the most recent edition of *Jewish Action* by the Halachic Organ Donor Society listed me among the rabbis who hold its organ donor card. I do indeed carry version 2 of the HODS card, but when ordering the card I had stipulated that my name not be used for any publicity materials. (The difference between the versions concerns the halachic definition of death.)

I made this request of HODS because I am disturbed by the idea of having rank-and-file *rabbanim* inveigh publicly on halachic issues of the greatest magnitude. *Yoreh yoreh semichah* certifies that a rabbi has achieved a certain maturity in his learning and in his ability to teach, but it does not confer *posek* status on the bearer, certainly not for matters of life and death.

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**  
**Allentown, Pennsylvania**