

A Loser in "Jewish Geography"

■ Devora Lifshutz's article "Reflections on Being a Loser in Jewish Geography" (winter 2008) leaves me wondering what *would* be considered appropriate to say to a new acquaintance. "Where are you from?" is a typical question. If that question is not "safe," which question is? It would seem that any question one picks may cause embarrassment, but if one does not ask any questions, how does one indicate friendly interest in learning about the other person?

EMIL M. FRIEDMAN, PHD
Waterbury, Connecticut

To Vaccinate or Not to Vaccinate?

■ I read with great interest "Halachic Aspects of Vaccinations" by Dr. Edward Reichman in the winter 2008 issue. As a chiropractor working with many Orthodox families who question whether to vaccinate their children, I found his points relevant and most interesting.

If one were to accept all of his postulates as true, his conclusions would be hard to deny. However, a few points bear mentioning.

The most common concern heard among people is the supposed link between vaccinations and autism, which Dr. Reichman mentions but tosses aside as unproven. However, an article in the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* (spring 2006) states that very specific neurodevelopmental disorders are associated with thimerosal-containing vaccines. An article like this cannot be discounted. Regarding the past historical triumph of vaccinations, there are many studies that question whether some of these diseases were already on the decline at the time the vaccines were instituted.

Even if some vaccines were helpful, does that mean that a person must

subject his child to everything out there? The hepatitis vaccine is given routinely to newborns. What is the purpose of this? Since there is a test to see if the mother is infected, why not test the mother during her prenatal care and then vaccinate the newborn if necessary? Why subject a newborn to a potential horrific side effect when there is a way to tell if the vaccination is necessary in the first place?

Further, what about the effect of all the cumulative vaccines, as more seem to be added yearly? Also, why vaccinate for diseases such as chicken pox, which is generally not a serious illness?

I would suggest that the halachic question of vaccination be broken down a bit further; moreover, we should not lump polio, chicken pox and hepatitis into one barrel. They are all vaccines, but not all vaccines are equally valid or reliable, and they shouldn't be painted with the same halachic brush.

HARRY SCHICK, DC
Highland Park, New Jersey

Dr. Reichman Responds

■ I thank Dr. Schick for his thoughtful letter, which represents the thoughts of others with whom I have spoken since the publication of the article. As I begin to put finger to keyboard to compose this response, another window is open on my desktop with an article from today's news, entitled "Study Shows No Link Between Autism and Vaccines: Italian Study Rules Out Thimerosal Fears." Therein it is written:

"Put together with the evidence of all the other studies, this tells us there is no reason to worry about the effect of thimerosal in vaccines," said the new study's lead author, Dr. Alberto Tozzi of Bambino Gesù Hospital in Rome.

I am not saying that this is the final word, but evidence is clearly mounting in one direction. Dr. Schick cites one article that found a

Jewish Action

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ORTHODOX UNION

www.ou.org/jewish_action

Editor

Nechama Carmel
carmeln@ou.org

Literary Editor

Matis Greenblatt

Assistant Editor

Natanya Herzstein

Contributing Editors

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Dr. Judith Bleich

Rabbi Emanuel Feldman

Rabbi Hillel Goldberg

Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt

Daisy Maryles

Rabbi Sol Roth

Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter

Rabbi Berel Wein

Media Sales Director

Barry Mase

845.270.3106

maseb@ou.org

Israel Advertising Representative

Lisa Rubin

972.54.721.1968

Subscriptions

Eva Holczer

212.613.8137

Design

KZ Creative

ORTHODOX UNION

President

Stephen J. Savitsky

Chairman of the Board

Harvey Blitz

Chairman, Board of Governors

Mark Bane

Publications Commission

Gerald M. Schreck, Chairman

Joel M. Schreiber, Chairman Emeritus

Executive Vice President

Rabbi Steven Weil

Executive Vice President, Emeritus

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

National Director of Planning and Communications

David Olivestone

© Copyright 2009 by the Orthodox Union.
Eleven Broadway, New York, NY 10004.
Telephone 212.563.4000 • www.ou.org
Periodicals Postage Paid, New York, NY
and at additional mailing offices.

Printed in Canada

Wacky twist on a summertime favorite.



Wacky Mac® Veggie Spirals make this summertime salad something unique. To make it even wackier, use Veggie Shapes with four delicious and different shapes of pasta in every package!

Visit www.wackymac.com for more recipe ideas and offers

Three Bean Wacky Sweet Salad

- 1 package **Wacky Mac**
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) green beans, drained; or 1½ cups fresh beans, cut into pieces
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) wax beans, drained; or 1½ cups fresh beans, cut into pieces
- 1 can (14.5 oz.) kidney beans, drained
- 1 cup chopped sweet onion
- ¾ cup cider vinegar
- ½ cup salad oil
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 1½ cups halved cherry tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste

Prepare Wacky Mac according to package directions; rinse with cool water. Meanwhile, combine drained beans and chopped onion in large bowl. In separate small bowl, combine cider vinegar and salad oil; slowly add in sugar to dissolve. Add drained Wacky Mac and vinegar mixture to beans. Add tomatoes and salt and pepper (optional); gently toss to combine. Makes 6 servings.



Coupon expires 12/31/09

75¢ off any size pkg of **Wacky Mac**

Kosher pasta

MANUFACTURER COUPON: Coupon NOT subject to doubling. This coupon is redeemable at face value only. Retailer: Strom Products Ltd will reimburse you for the face value of this coupon plus 2¢ for handling provided it is taken in partial payment for Wacky Mac. Invoices proving purchase of sufficient stock to cover coupons presented must be shown upon request. Customer must pay any sales tax. Cash redemption value 1/20 of one cent. This offer void wherever taxed, restricted or prohibited. Mail coupon to Strom Products Ltd., CMS-Dept. #71730, 1 Fawcett Drive, Del Rio, TX 78840

171730 00075 7 0810030 00074

relationship, though not causality, between very specific neurodevelopmental disorders and thimerosal-containing vaccines.

Herein lies the complexity. Today, everyone has equal access to the intricate world of scientific research. In moments, with the stroke of a few keys and a few clicks of the mouse, anyone can summon dozens of articles from the world's premier scientific journals on any topic. There will often be articles that support a variety of positions. One article, however, does not medical fact or dogma make. Opinions evolve with the accumulation of multiple studies, each analyzed on the merit of its design, execution and subsequent corroboration. Just as a layperson cannot render a halachic decision from a word search on Bar-Ilan University's Jewish Database, one cannot adequately assess the risks and benefits of vaccination through an Internet search.

Dr. Schick asserts that "an article like this cannot be discounted." I respectfully disagree. If the article's conclusions cannot be repeated; if the

study design was flawed; if the study population was not statistically significant or if the totality of mounting evidence is against its conclusions, then indeed it can be discounted.

I agree with Dr. Schick that the halachic question needs to be "broken down a bit further," and that all vaccines should not "be painted with the same halachic brush." This is indeed the case to some extent, as evidenced in the literature cited for reference at the end of my original article. The article was intended for merely broad strokes, with the finer details left for further study in the halachic literature. Admittedly, there is further halachic analysis that could be done.

Questioning conclusions and suspending acceptance pending challenge are the hallmarks of the halachic mind. Dr. Schick's thoughtful and intelligent comments are not only welcomed, they are encouraged. However, intellectual honesty likewise compels us to know the limits of our expertise, and the misinterpretation or misapplication of science by some (excluding Dr. Schick) to the possible detriment of our families and our communities is deeply troublesome. To be sure, the medical profession is far from perfect, but, to borrow from a halachic adage, "*ein lerofeh elah ma sh'einav ro'ot*"—the medical profession relies on the best available evidence. While the conclusions of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are not in the realm of binding *pesak*, they nonetheless represent the efforts of years of intense research by some of the brightest minds in the medical community, and should be given due respect. However, as human beings, medical professionals are not

Correction

In the spring 2009 issue of *Jewish Action*, in his article "Chametz Sheavar Alav HaPesach: The Supermarket Controversy," Rabbi Yaakov Luban mistakenly wrote that the Talmud was redacted in the fourth century. In fact, it was redacted in the sixth century.

Letters to the editor should be succinct and should concern recently published JA articles.

All letters must be signed and must include the writer's telephone number or e-mail address, for office use only. Letters selected for publication may be edited for space and/or clarity, and must be a maximum of 1,000 words.

E-mail letters to ja@ou.org

or mail to:

Letters to the Editor
Jewish Action/Orthodox Union
11 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

immune to the possibility of error. Is it possible that there are flaws in their approach? Absolutely. Must we constantly re-analyze and revisit the data and revise the policies? Yes. The history of science, and in particular the history of pharmaceuticals, are replete with stories of the introduction of "miracle medicines" that were subsequently rescinded from circulation due to unforeseen complications. However, the scientific theory of vaccination is unequivocally based on terra firma, and while there are clearly circumstances where vaccination should be withheld, these exceptions should be rare and discussed with medical professionals.

Thoughtful, nuanced, selective use of vaccinations by those trained to interpret the data or by those who have medical or personal reasons to refrain from vaccinations is one thing; mass hysteria, or refusal to vaccinate based on popular articles, hearsay and unproven assumptions is quite another.

I consider this exchange somewhat analogous to vaccination itself. My first article provided immunity to some, but this exchange is a form of booster shot. More discussion is needed on this issue, and further booster shots may be in order. Yet, despite the best practice and the best intentions, there will always be a percentage of people for whom the immunization (either physiological or halachic) is not successful. ■

Advertise in the next issue of Jewish Action!

Contact:

IN THE US

Barry Mase
845.270.3106
maseb@ou.org

IN ISRAEL

Lisa Rubin
972.054.721.1968
ldrubin@netvision.net.il



YESHIVAS OHR YOSEF

TORAH HIGH SCHOOL OF BERGEN COUNTY

YESHIVAS OHR YOSEF

שיבת אור יוסף

OHR YOSEF TORAH HIGH SCHOOL
OF BERGEN COUNTY

HARAV AHARON FELDMAN SHLITA
NASI

RABBI HERSCHEL GROSSMAN
MENACHEL

RABBI YISRAEL TEICHMAN
MASHGIACH RUCHANI

DR. RICHARD WAGNER
GENERAL STUDIES PRINCIPAL

Yeshivas Ohr Yosef
Kehillat Keshet
2 Engle Street
Tenafly, NJ 07670

201.921.4921
or 201.567.1224



The objective of Yeshivas **OHR YOSEF**, the Mesivta High School of Bergen County, is to inspire our students to achieve a lifelong love and commitment to Torah, and to provide the gamut of skills and tools they need to achieve this.

OHR YOSEF has created an environment in which the rebbe-talmid relationship is paramount ... Where the students volunteer and are involved with the local community... Where the entire focus is on the needs and welfare of the individual student ... Where the qualities of integrity, responsibility, maturity and character are instilled together with academic excellence in both Judaic and general studies.

.....
"... A LIFELONG LOVE AND COMMITMENT TO TORAH ..."
.....

Such an environment is designed to produce young men who are dignified, tolerant, respectful and articulate; prepared and ready to become responsible and respected adults.

.....
"... THE REBBE-TALMID RELATIONSHIP IS PARAMOUNT ..."
.....

Yeshivas **OHR YOSEF** has been established and operates under the inspiration and guidance of the revered Rosh Yeshiva Harav Aharon Feldman, Shlita, of Ner Israel, Baltimore.

.....
"... TO PRODUCE YOUNG MEN WHO ARE DIGNIFIED,
TOLERANT, RESPECTFUL AND ARTICULATE ..."
.....

Strategically located in Tenafly, in Northern New Jersey, **OHR YOSEF** is meeting the growing demand for such a mesivta and serves students from Bergen, Passaic, and Rockland Counties, Elizabeth, Staten Island, Cleveland, Philadelphia and across the United States.

.....
"... SERVES STUDENTS FROM BERGEN, PASSAIC, AND
ROCKLAND COUNTIES, ELIZABETH, STATEN ISLAND,
CLEVELAND, PHILADELPHIA & ACROSS THE UNITED STATES..."
.....

If you have a son entering 9th grade next year and/or the **OHR YOSEF** vision resonates with you, please contact us at the Yeshiva to learn more about our special mission and the great success that we have merited BE"H.



WITH THE BLESSINGS
AND GUIDANCE OF
HARAV
AHARON FELDMAN
SHLITA



RABBI
HERSCHEL GROSSMAN
MENACHEL

- DYNAMIC NIGHT SEDER AND MISHMAR PROGRAM
- A JOINT PROGRAM WITH NEARBY ENGLEWOOD HOSPITAL,
COMBINING CHESED WITH MEDICAL RESEARCH PROJECTS AND SEMINARS
- GUEST LECTURE SERIES FEATURING NOTED NOTED RABBANIM & PROFESSIONALS
- SPORTS, TRIPS AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL: 201.921.4921 OR 201.567.1224