

President's Message

Laying the Groundwork for the OU's Future

By Stephen J. Savitsky



Organizations must continually renew themselves by preparing new generations of leaders. Given the Orthodox Union's wide variety of new initiatives, it became clear to me that it was time to start grooming a new generation of OU leaders both to continue these programs and to develop their own. Consequently, as one of my first acts as president, I established the Young Leadership Cabinet (YLC) to lay the groundwork for the OU's future.

The plan was to bring in some twenty-five outstanding young men and women with a firm commitment to the OU's guiding principles of Torah and *mitzvot*, who are well on their way to successful business and professional careers, and to integrate them into the

OU infrastructure. To accomplish this, we appointed Rabbi Daniel Schonbuch—himself a proven young leader with a great record of success in administering the summer programs of the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY)—to be the professional assigned to this project. To give these leaders a firm understanding of how the OU operates, we assigned each YLC member to at least one OU commission—a lay leadership body that works closely with an OU department. We also began offering ongoing seminars and lectures, which will enable YLC members to meet with outstanding Jewish leaders, both lay and professional, who can serve as role models.

We hope to develop a large pool of talented and capable men and women who can serve as Jewish leaders both at the OU and in their individual communities.

In addition, the YLC will play a leading role in Project Areivim, a program that sends young leaders on brief visits to communities throughout North America

as OU emissaries. The purpose of Project Areivim—with its underlying concept that all Jews must look out for one another—is to bridge the gap between the OU's available talent and the communities who can use that talent to supplement their homegrown strengths.

The YLC started in the New York tri-state area, but is already expanding to the West Coast, and we hope to open four or five more chapters within the next year in the Midwest, the Southeast, Canada and elsewhere. To ensure that the various chapters do not operate in a vacuum, and to provide an opportunity for our young leaders nationwide to get to know each other, we are arranging a YLC weekend—an event that will include both leadership training and social activities.

My pledge, which I will, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, emphasize at the gathering, is to make our young leaders feel comfortable within the OU, with the example of Charles Harary, the chairman of the YLC, who, when asked what kind of Jew he is, says, "an OU Jew." We hope to develop a large pool of talented and capable men and women who can serve as Jewish leaders both at the OU and in their individual communities. We therefore look to the YLC as a training ground for Jewish communal service in general and for the Orthodox Jewish


community in particular.

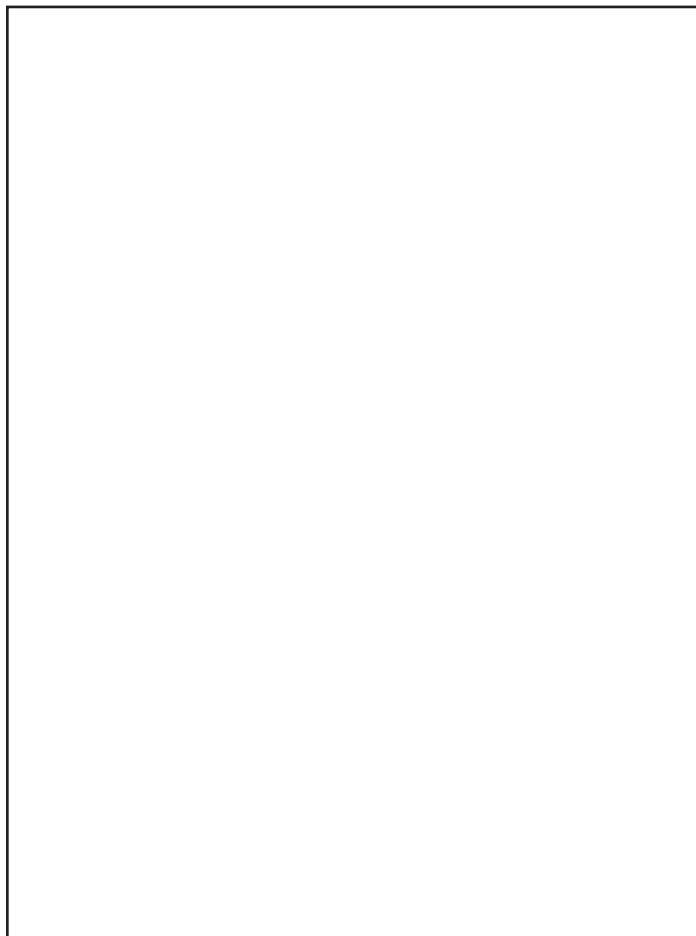
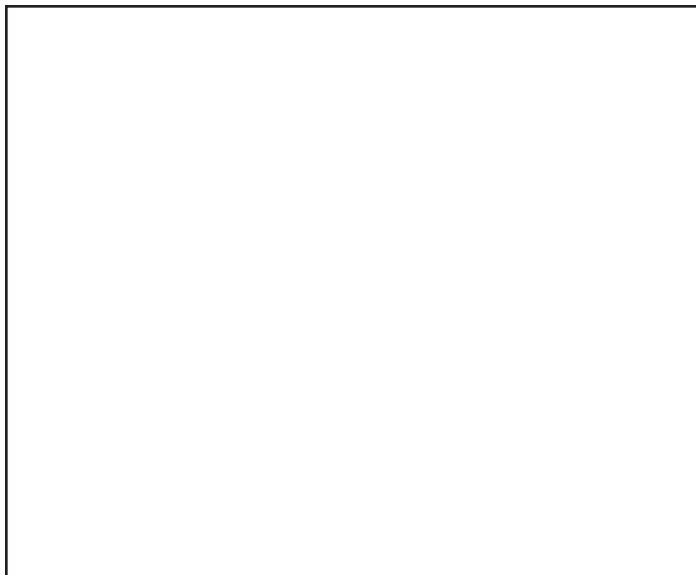
I would like to add that the OU is continuing to work with smaller communities nationwide, with a commitment to helping them grow. We think that much of that growth can come from young people who are just starting out—people who may be searching for an atmosphere not found in larger communities, and who would be attracted to more affordable housing than is available in larger centers of Orthodox life. Of course, at the OU we always encourage *aliyah*, but if that is not a possibility, relocating to any number of smaller communities in North America is an excellent option. By spreading out, we hope to strengthen Jewish political power rather than have it restricted to large urban settings.

We have invited the leaders of several communities to attend OU seminars on synagogue management in Los Angeles, CA, Columbus, OH, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and New York, NY, and to a major conference in Milwaukee, WI, in September, at which special emphasis will be placed on smaller communities.

The OU is continuing to work with smaller communities nationwide.

We are also developing a web program directed towards smaller communities. Additionally, I am also proud to announce that in an attempt to encourage innovative programming, the OU has initiated a grants program that is open to all communities. By funding a few outstanding initiatives, the OU will not only make the winning ideas happen, but will also make them available to other communities as well. For more information about the grants program, please call our Department of Community and Synagogue Services.

With the recognition that we are all responsible for one another, we hope that our communities, large and small, will share each other's strengths and that the new generation of OU leaders will play a major role in making this happen. 



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