

## Soviet Agreement To Permit A Mohel And Shochet To Train In U.S. Another Sign Of 'Spiritual Perestroika'

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Synagogue and president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, added:

"In itself, the decision to permit these two men to study here is most welcome. But it is even more significant as a symbol and a promise — a symbol of the growing responsiveness of Soviet officials to the need of Jews in the USSR for cultural and religious expression, holding the promise of further progress ahead.

"But if this progress is to be achieved, American Jews will have to take the lead in serving as a resource community. We must help train religious functionaries and teachers, and provide religious articles and books on Jewish culture and Jewish history.

"At the same time, we must urge Soviet authorities to facilitate the study of Hebrew and Yiddish and to add a Jewish component to the recently-signed U.S.-Soviet cultural exchange agreement.

"That is why I have long advocated a dual-track effort for Soviet Jewry — emigration for those who wish to leave, full opportunity to live as Jews for those who stay."

### 'Repaying Our Debt to Russian Jewry'

Rabbi Schneier, who met with Mikhail Gorbachev in Washington and in Moscow this year, said the policy of glasnost "presents an unprecedented opening to revive Jewish cultural and religious life in the Soviet Union." He recalled:

"When the fledgling American Jewish community entered its period of greatest population growth following the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, it was East European Jewry — and particularly the Jews of Russia — who supplied the rabbis, scholars, religious functionaries, teachers and others. They came to America and planted the seeds that have flowered into the American Jewish community of today.

"Now we have the opportunity to repay that great debt by making available the resources that the Jews of the USSR want and need so that they may study, understand and practice their Jewish heritage."

### 'A Historic Moment'

Rabbi Schneier continued: "A historic change is taking place in the USSR, not only in the new relationship between Washington and Moscow but also in the willingness of Soviet leaders to confront and rectify the mistakes of the past. I felt this during my own recent visits, and it has been confirmed not only by Soviet leaders with whom I met but also by Jews in Moscow, Kiev, Tashkent, Bukhara.

"At the same time, Soviet officials have shown a growing willingness to permit ethnic and religious

groups greater opportunities for self-expression. In a similar vein, church-state relations are being reassessed and the 1929 legislation that adversely affected religious life in the USSR is under review.

"These currents of change have had a positive effect on the Jewish community. For the first time in 40 years, I believe, there is the possibility of transforming the cultural and religious wilderness in which Soviet Jews have lived."

### Arrangements Completed With Head of Soviet Religious Affairs Council

Rabbi Schneier said the mohel and shochet coming to New York would arrive here next month. Their tuition, travel, living expenses and other costs will be met by the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an ecumenical organization that promotes religious freedom around the world. The Foundation also sponsored the advanced training of Rabbi Adolph Shayevich and Cantor Vladimir Pliss of Moscow who studied at Yeshiva University from February until the end of April this year.

Concerning the shochet and the mohel who will be coming to New York next month, Rabbi Schneier said he had completed arrangements for their visit during talks in Moscow earlier this summer with Konstantin Kharchev, chairman of the Council of Religious Affairs of the USSR Council of Ministers.

The mohel — Avrech Kaziev, 35 — lives in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, which has a Jewish population of 100,000 and four functioning synagogues. The kosher slaughterer — Moshe Tamarin, 27, of Moscow — learned to slaughter fowl from the city's only kosher slaughterer, now 72 years old. In New York Mr. Tamarin will be trained in the ritual slaughter of cattle.

"This is no time to sit back and relax our efforts, but neither should we ignore the positive steps taken and the new possibilities for Soviet Jews to strengthen their Jewish identity," Rabbi Schneier said.

These steps, he said, include the release of Jewish prisoners of conscience, the emigration of many longtime refuseniks, the granting of exit visas to more than 1,000 Jewish emigrants per month for the past year, and the exchange of consular delegations between the Soviet Union and Israel.

### Manhattan's Park East and Moscow's Choral Synagogue — Sister Congregations

Rabbi Schneier said he had been personally involved in a number of other programs designed to strengthen Jewish religious life in the USSR, among them:

- The establishment of a sister-congregation relationship — the first of its kind — between Park East Synagogue, Rabbi Schneier's congregation in New York, and Moscow's Choral Synagogue. Within this framework, permission was granted for Rabbi Marc Schneier — Rabbi Arthur Schneier's son — to conduct Passover services and lead the communal seder at the Choral Synagogue in Moscow earlier this year. The young Rabbi Schneier and two cantors from Park East Synagogue substituted for the Moscow synagogue's own rabbi and cantor, who were enrolled in an intensive program of study at Yeshiva University. Two tons of kosher food and other Passover supplies contributed by Park East Synagogue accompanied the American rabbi and cantors when they went to Moscow.

- An agreement by Moscow's City Council last June 22 to return to the Choral Synagogue a Jewish community building adjoining the synagogue that had been requisitioned for use as a military hospital in 1941. The building will be restored and rebuilt by Park East Synagogue, which will provide the funds and the expertise to

build much-needed classrooms, a library, a Jewish museum and a full-fledged kosher restaurant — all part of the building's renovation as a Jewish cultural center.

Rabbi Schneier said he had initiated discussions for the return of the building with the chairman of the Council of Religious Affairs of the Soviet Council of Ministers, Konstantin Kharchev, in February 1987. Those talks led to a recommendation by Moscow Mayor Valery Saikin to the Council for the building's return.

- The opening last November of the USSR's first kosher take-out restaurant on the grounds of the Choral Synagogue, with food supplies purchased by the Appeal of Conscience Foundation in Budapest and shipped by air to Moscow.

- The distribution of 10,000 high holy day prayerbooks, 5,000 daily prayerbooks and 5,000 chumashim, all in Hebrew and Russian, in major centers of Jewish population. Here too permission was granted by Mr. Kharchev, who visited the U.S. in 1986 as a guest of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation. The religious books were all printed in the U.S. from various editions originally published in Vilna (now Vilnius), the capital of Lithuania, nearly 100 years ago.

The 10,000 Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur prayerbooks, airshipped in June as a gift from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, comprised the largest consignment of Jewish religious books ever shipped into the USSR, Rabbi Schneier said.

## BBYO Publishes Manual For Jewish Teenagers Looking To Combat Hunger And Homelessness

WASHINGTON — Jewish teenagers concerned about homelessness and hunger can now receive a comprehensive activity and resource guide designed specifically for them.

The booklet, written and published by the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), is part of BBYO's program thrust — Project R.E.A.C.H. (Responsibility Everywhere to Aid and Care for the Homeless).

Throughout the year 35,000 Jewish teenagers around the world will use the creative activities and resources listed to educate themselves and their communities about homelessness and hunger. The homeless program thrust was officially kicked off at the BBYO international convention, Aug. 17-23 at the B'nai B'rith Perlman Camp in Starlight, PA.

The activities listed in the manual include political action, volunteer activities, and stimulating discussion guides. Also listed are Jewish community resources, national organizations, and coalitions for the homeless and food banks.

"This booklet will be the building block of our national and international efforts to make the Jewish and non-Jewish community aware of homelessness and hunger in our own communities," said Arnie Sohinki, Assistant International Director. "By choosing this issue as their program thrust, our members have shown their commitment to not only facing the realities of the problem, but doing something about it as well."

The program thrust is an annual feature of the BBYO program. During this past year's thrust — AIDS: We C.A.R.E. (Campaign for AIDS Recognition and Education) — BBYO sponsored activities ranged from raising thousands of dollars for AIDS research to community panel discussions with rabbis, doctors, and AIDS victims.

Single copies of the homeless booklet are available free of charge from BBYO, 1640 Rhode Island Ave., Washington, D.C. 20036; telephone (202) 857-6639.

Legendary jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli will appear in UNLV's Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall Sept. 22 at 8 p.m. under the auspices of the UNLV Performing Arts Center.

For more information regarding the Sept. 22 performance, call the Performing Arts Center at 739-3535 or 739-3840. General admission is \$12.50. Tickets will be available beginning Sept. 1 at the Performing Arts Center Box Office.

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