



## IN CONVERSATION WITH

# Rabbi Avrohom Weinrib

*Rav of Cong. Zichron Eliezer,  
Cincinnati, Ohio*

### *Would the Rav please provide some background information?*

I grew up in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn and attended Mesivta of Long Beach, and afterwards Yeshiva Bais Moshe of Scranton. That was followed by seven years at Mir Yerushalayim. I received *semichah* from Harav Nissan Karelitz, *shlita*, and, *lbc"l*, and Harav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, *zt"l*.

In 2002 I joined the Chicago Community Kollel and three years later became Rav of Agudas Yisrael of West Rogers Park. In 2012 we moved to Cincinnati where I became Rav of Zichron Eliezer as well as rabbinic administrator of Cincinnati Kosher.

### *Who has been the primary influence in the Rav's life? Please share with us some recollections of that person or persons.*

I was fortunate in that I grew up in a family where the accent was on helping and inspiring others. My maternal uncle was Harav Yitzchak Isbee, *zt"l*, Rav at Agudas Yisrael Bais Binyomin. His father was Harav Leibel Isbee, *zt"l*, a Rav in the Bronx. They served as role models for me in terms of what it means to give of oneself to the community and to help people.

My father, Rabbi Yonah Weinrib, is a well-known artist, author and lecturer who utilizes art as a medium for *harbatzas haTorah*, to bring the teachings of Torah

and *Chazal* to life through art; he has published volumes on many Torah topics and lectured across the country, bringing people closer to Torah. He and *lbc"l* my mother, Mrs. Miriam Weinrib, *a"h*, together built a home where *chessed* reigned supreme.

Regarding *Rebbeim*, I wish to mention my *Rosh Yeshivah* in Mir, Harav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, *zt"l*. Rav Nosson Tzvi was a role model of someone who continually pushed himself to make progress, to build, to accomplish, despite the limitations imposed by his fragile state of health. I have in my mind an ever-present image of him walking into the *beis medrash* to deliver a *shiur klali*, supported by two people, and afterwards, despite his exhaustion as a result of delivering the *shiur*, rising and raising his voice, reaching a crescendo in explaining a point for his talmidim.

I maintain a close *kesher* with Harav Yosef Elefant, *shlita*, a much-beloved *maggid shiur* in the Mir, despite 20 years having passed since being in his *shiur*. His commitment to caring for his *talmidim*, both past and present, is a major influence on my life.

### *Does your kehillah's name indicate an association with Harav Eliezer Silver, zt"l?*

Yes. Rav Silver was in fact Rav of this *kehillah*, which is over 100 years old and in his day was called Kneseth Israel Congregation. He led it from 1931 until his *petirah* in 1968. The name was changed to Zichron Eliezer in recent years.

Interestingly, his chair was discovered and brought into the shul. It is used during *brisos* as the *kisei shel Eliyahu* upon which the baby is placed.

### How is your shul unique?

We have a motto that sums up our *kehillah's* aim — “One family growing together.” Our members constitute one big family whose goal is to grow together in every aspect of *Yiddishkeit* and of life in general. This determination to “*shteig*” — to grow — has brought about a great deal of enthusiasm and energy in our shul, which is tangible.

Rav Elefant came for a Shabbos of *Chizuk* several years ago and was so taken with the enthusiasm for growth and sense of togetherness he found here that he told us, “You have to get the word out about what is going on here in Cincinnati,” in order to attract to the community more *bnei Torah baalei batim* and their families. When a number of our members visited Eretz Yisrael, our shul organized a *melaveh malkah* for people who were looking to move to Eretz Yisrael, to which he came and spoke, sharing with the guests his positive impressions of our community.

Indeed, we have had waves of families relocating here each year. Fifteen families moved in last year; this year there have been ten so far. Close to 50 families have moved here since we moved to Cincinnati. They come from all over — places such as Brooklyn, Lakewood, Baltimore. People desire to be part of something special, which they find here, besides the wonderful quality of life that this area affords.

### What was the most memorable event in your years of rabbanus?

For me, what is most memorable in my years of *rabbanus* is observing the passion of those around me for *Yiddishkeit*. We have a lot of programming that fosters this sense of passion. To illustrate, for the past five years we have held for our *mispallelim* a “Journey of Torah” to larger Torah communities such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Baltimore.

We spend a day learning, listening to *shiurim* and essentially gaining *chizuk* in *mekomos haTorah*. Particularly those who recently left yeshivah are visibly excited to be back in the *beis medrash* for a full day. We are constantly seeking to visit places of *chizuk* and *aliyah*. This Elul, in fact, we plan to go to Eretz Yisrael for this purpose, over the Labor Day weekend.

We have annual Shabbosos of *Chizuk* in which we host *marbitzei Torah* such as, *shlita*, Harav Elya Brudny, Dayan

Every individual contributes much to the klal in his own way just by his or her presence, some more actively and others more passively.



Aharon Dovid Dunner, and Rav Elefant, as I mentioned before. It is an all-encompassing experience; we gain not only from their lessons of Torah but we even go to the airport to greet them, thereby gaining a sense of appreciation for *kvod haTorah*.

### Tell us something about the learning opportunities in your shul.

One example is our participation in the Shviti learning program established by Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, in which our members take a topic in *Halachah* and delve into it in depth, utilizing the source materials that are provided — in *Chumash*, *Shulchan Aruch*, *she'eilos* and *teshuvos*, etc., from which they derive tremendous satisfaction. This level of learning is something that many, perhaps, haven't experienced since their yeshivah days.

Still another illustration is the spirited give-and-take during the *shiur* we have on Shabbos after our weekly *kiddush*, and which is replicated during the *Halachah shiur* for the women I give on Shabbos afternoons.

In general, the thrust behind all our learning opportunities is that they are interactive, all are encouraged to participate and thereby feel connected to Torah.

I wish to mention that Rabbi Yisroel Kaufman, our assistant Rav who joined us recently, is doing a phenomenal job assisting me in leading the shul and running the programming.

### Do you have a parting message for our readers?

I once spoke at an Agudah convention on the topic of “Adults at Risk.” I noted that the idea of a “child at risk” implies the child is rebelling against the system, while an “adult at risk” means people are not part of the system. They are not connected to a source — a shul, a *shiur*, etc. — that provides inspiration and enthusiasm for *Yiddishkeit*.

I am gratified that our *kehillah* is a place where people do feel connected to something bigger than themselves — they feel they're an integral part, they feel a sense of *achrayus* (responsibility), and participate in *tzorchei tzibbur*, communal endeavors. I always emphasize that every individual contributes much to the *klal* in his own way just by his or her presence, some more actively and others more passively. The importance of this concept cannot be spoken about enough, since such understanding gives a person the fuel for continuous *aliyah* in *avodas Hashem*.

Thank you, Rabbi Weinrib. We wish you much continued *hatzlachah* in your *avodas hakodesh*. ■