

A Snapshot in Time: The Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington, Circa 1964

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If you were to drop a typical Washington, DC Orthodox synagogue member of the late 1940s–early 1960s into the community we know today, he would not recognize his hometown. In the Washington that person knew, some shuls had stronger *minyanim* on weekdays than on Shabbos, as many “Orthodox” Jews owned retail shops that did their biggest business on Friday night and Saturday. *Mechitzos* in shuls were getting lower — or disappearing entirely. Congregations were merging due to lack of attendees or were leaving Orthodoxy to retain and attract members. Most children attended public school and received a few hours of Jewish education per week, at most. In short, Washington of that era was viewed, even by some of its rabbis, as a non-religious town with no Jewish future.

Much of the credit for the community’s turnaround goes to the Vaad HaRabanim/Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington members who posed for this photograph in approximately 1964.



Vaad HaRabanim of Greater Washington, circa 1964. Standing, left to right: Rabbi Hillel Klavan, Rabbi Harry Kaufman, Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer, Rabbi Philip Rabinowitz. Seated, left to right: Rabbi Chaim Williamowsky, Rabbi Moshe Levinson, Rabbi Simon Burnsein, Rabbi Dr. Arthur Bogner.

This article presents short biographies and reminiscences about each rabbi, presented in the order in which they arrived in Washington, gleaned from the memories of those who knew them, newspaper articles,¹ and other documents.² Of course, these vignettes are not complete biographies and some readers may remember certain incidents or dates differently. In this season when we recall the birth pangs of the Jewish People, it is our hope that this article will give the reader an appreciation of the challenges these rabbis faced and their roles in building the thriving *makom Torah* (Torah community) we enjoy today.

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Levinson zt"l (seated, second from left)

Rabbi Levinson was born in Yerushalayim in the summer of 1898 and received his rabbinical training there. After briefly holding a rabbinic post in the Galilee, Rabbi Levinson came to America in 1924 and led a congregation in Greenport, NY. In 1929, Rabbi Levinson moved to Alexandria, VA, where he was rabbi of Agudas Achim Congregation until about 1935. Moving across the Potomac, his next position was as rabbi of Beth Sholom. In 1947, he became rabbi of Congregation Beth El, where he remained until 1965, when he became rabbi of Congregation Beth Joshua. For many years, Rabbi Levinson served the Vaad as the *sofer for gittin* (scribe for divorce documents).

Rabbi Levinson's daughter, Mrs. Norma Burdett (Kemp Mill), related that during the Beth Sholom years, Rabbi Levinson taught Hebrew school at the shul. He did not own a car, so he would walk twenty minutes from the family's home at 435 Newton Place NW. Along the way he picked up the students, so that he soon looked like the Pied Piper of legend.

Mrs. Burdett also recalled that, during the World War II years, there often would be soldiers sleeping on every available surface in their living room. When the family came down in the morning, they would count pairs of shoes to see how many guests they had.

To accommodate those working on the war effort and ensure that they would experience Shabbos in some form, Rabbi Levinson introduced a late Friday night *Kabbalas Shabbos* service in Beth Sholom (in addition to prayers at the regular time) followed by a kiddush.

Rabbi Levinson spearheaded the founding of Yeshivas Bais Yehuda, better known as the Hebrew Academy of Greater Washington ("the Academy"). Mrs. Burdett explained that Washington's population swelled with temporary workers, many of them Jewish, during World War II. Rabbi Levinson foresaw the impending end of the war and realized that a Jewish day school would be necessary to induce some of those wartime workers to remain in Washington. He called a meeting of rabbis and lay leaders to kick off the effort to establish the school.

The Academy opened in February 1944 with 21 students and two teachers. Rabbi Levinson served as the first president of the school, while his son-in-law, Rabbi Sam Rosenbaum, became the first principal. By December 1949, the student body had grown to 230 and work began on

¹ Washington's *Evening Star* newspaper frequently carried respectful stories about the Orthodox community and the Vaad used that newspaper to communicate with the community.

² Due to space constraints, citations have been omitted. An annotated version is available by contacting the author at shlomodkatz@gmail.com.

the building at 16th Street and Fort Stevens Drive NW that served the school for decades thereafter. (A year earlier, sixteen Washington and Northern Virginia congregations and their rabbis had participated in “Hebrew Academy Sabbath,” with the rabbis dedicating their sermons to enrollment in and fundraising for the school or, perhaps, the building campaign.)

A sign of the times: In 1952, the newly founded Shomrai Emunah congregation borrowed a Sefer Torah from Rabbi Levinson’s shul. Seeing Rabbi Levinson in tears, Shomrai’s members asked why. Rabbi Levinson explained that “no one starts Orthodox shuls anymore,” and he feared that in six months the new congregation will have left Orthodoxy.³ Thankfully, his worry was for naught.

Rabbi Levinson passed away in 1981. The Hebrew Academy’s Upper School was named in his memory. His wife, Rebbetzin Tikva Levinson, passed away in 1983.

Rabbi Dr. Arthur (Meir) Bogner zt”l (*seated, right*)

Rabbi Bogner was born in Vienna, Austria on December 6, 1906, and earned his *semichah* there. He also studied at the University of Vienna, including under Dr. Sigmund Freud, and earned a PhD in Philology (the study of languages — more about this below). In 1938, Rabbi Bogner fled Vienna and was soon hired as rabbi of Washington’s Ezras Israel Congregation, which he served for the next 40 years.

Rabbi Bogner’s grandson, Dr. Ari Gross, a Washington native now living in West Hempstead, NY, related that his grandfather’s knowledge of seven or eight languages came in handy during the Holocaust, when he would translate for European-born rabbis such as Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz zt”l, who tried to lobby the White House on behalf of European Jewry. Much has been written about President Roosevelt’s refusal to meet with visiting rabbis. After one such refusal, Rabbi Kalmanowitz stood in a White House corridor crying out in anguish. He was heard by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., a Jew, who offered to help. That meeting led to the establishment of the War Refugee Board. Another grandson, Mr. Nossi Gross, leader of Baltimore’s Zemer Orchestra, added that there was a period when Rabbi Bogner was visiting the State Department three times a week.

Dr. Ari Gross related that Rabbi Bogner always dressed formally, as he believed befit a rabbi, even on the hottest summer days. When he would walk in the streets on Shabbos, storekeepers would come out of their shops and apologize to him for being open. Washington native Rabbi Tzvi Rosen, now a STAR-K Kashrus Administrator, and my father, Dr. Irving Katz, both recall that Rabbi Bogner had higher expectations of his congregants than did many rabbis of the era. For example, he was raising the height of the *mechitzah* when many others were struggling to keep a minimally kosher separation between men and women. He encouraged shopping at Shabbos-observant merchants while others were elated if their congregants ate kosher. Likewise, Rabbi Bogner was the first to encourage congregants to observe *halachos* such as not shaving during the Omer, according to Rabbi Rosen. Rabbi Bogner’s grandson, Rabbi Isser Malin (Yerushalayim), recalled that his grandfather insisted on Cholov Yisrael long before it was popular or even practical; therefore, he usually had to drink his coffee black.

³ As told by Rabbi Dr. Hersch Mendlowitz, now of Yerushalayim, one of Shomrai Emunah’s founding members.

In approximately 1950, Rabbi Bogner established Sinai House (later renamed Raphael House), the first kosher halfway house in the United States.

One of Rabbi Bogner's sons-in-law was Rabbi Nechemiah Malin *zt"l*. In the 1950s, he started the first Yeshiva high school in Washington, DC, named Ohr Torah of Brisk, together with his brother, Rabbi Meir Malin *zt"l*. On June 7, 1959, the *Sunday Star* announced that singer Shlomo Carlebach would give a concert to benefit the "Brisker Yeshiva . . . which prepares high school students for advance[d] studies to become rabbis and other workers in the religious field." In 1961, Ohr Torah was meeting at 1333 Emerson Street NW and had 15 students. The next year, however, Rabbi Nechemiah Malin made *aliyah* and the school closed.

Rabbi Bogner passed away in Yerushalayim in 1996, one week after his 90th birthday. His Rebbetzin, Felice (Lichtig) Bogner, passed away in 1987.

Rabbi Chaim Tuvia Williamowsky *zt"l* (seated, left)

Rabbi Williamowsky was born in 1896 in Grodno Gubernia, in today's Belarus. At age nine, he left home to study at the Bialystok Talmud Torah. Later, he studied at Yeshivas Toras Chessed in Brisk, headed by Rabbi Moshe Sokolovsky *zt"l*. He also studied under the famed Rabbi Shimon Shkop *zt"l*.

In 1924, Rabbi Williamowsky came to America and became the rabbi in Hendersonville, NC, where he had relatives. From there, he moved to Durham, NC, where he remained for ten years. In the late 1930s, he briefly served as rabbi in Alexandria, Virginia.

From 1939 to 1941, Rabbi Williamowsky was rabbi of Southeast Hebrew Congregation ("Southeast"). During his brief tenure, Rabbi Williamowsky focused on the youth, introducing a Friday night *minyan* at which the youth led the services and delivered a *Dvar Torah*. In 1941, he left the rabbinate, but remained in the Washington community for decades as a *mohel* and served on the Vaad, at times, as Treasurer. (Many of the men I interviewed for this article indicated that he had been their *mohel*.) He served as Executive Director and as a Trustee of the Academy, as well as chaplain of various organizations and institutions, including the Jewish Welfare Board and St. Elizabeth's Hospital. A small item in the *Washington Evening Star* on April 11, 1956, reports that Rabbi Williamowsky is asking the Jewish community to donate Hebrew and English books to that hospital's library. Another newspaper story announces a Chanukah party for Jewish servicemen at the Williamowsky home, 6500 Ninth Avenue, in Chillum (Prince George's County). In 1958, Rabbi Williamowsky was among the founders of the Jewish Foundation for Retarded Children, now known as the National Children's Center.

Rabbi Williamowsky passed away in September 1971.

Rabbi Simon (Yehoshua) Burnstein *zt"l* (seated, second from right)

A descendant of twenty-four generations of rabbis, Rabbi Burnstein was born on March 25, 1917, in Wiszkow, Poland, and was brought to America at five years old. His Hebrew name was given him after someone who had been named for Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk *zt"l* (1680–1756), author of the classic Talmud commentary, *Pnei Yehoshua*.

The future Rabbi Burnstein was the first student to enroll in Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim (the Rabbinical Seminary of America) in New York, founded by Rabbi Dovid Leibowitz *zt"l*. Rabbi Burnstein subsequently received *semichah* from that yeshiva.

In 1942, Rabbi Burnstein succeeded Rabbi Williamowsky as rabbi of Southeast, when it was still located on Capitol Hill in the southeast quadrant of Washington, DC (hence its name). After World War II, he spearheaded the construction of a 450-seat synagogue on 9th Street SE where Southeast continued to meet for more than 25 years — the last remaining shul in that part of Washington. Demographic changes eventually reduced the shul's membership and ultimately necessitated its relocation in 1971, under Rabbi Burnstein's leadership, to its current home in White Oak.

During World War II, Rabbi Burnstein was active in the efforts of Vaad Hatzalah to rescue European Jews. He also served as a chaplain at several hospitals and military facilities in the area, as well as both a teacher and Executive Director at the Academy. Rabbi Rosen recalls Rabbi Burnstein regularly singing Birkas HaMazon (Grace After Meals) out loud, from a *bentcher*, in the Academy teachers' room. Around 1975, Rabbi Burnstein was instrumental in building an *eruv* in White Oak, which later expanded to become the Silver Spring Eruv that encompasses White Oak, Kemp Mill, and nearby neighborhoods. Rabbi Burnstein served as President of the Vaad and, for the last twelve years of his life, Executive Vice President.

Rabbi Burnstein passed away on October 17, 1980. Speaking on the occasion of his 10th *yahrzeit*, Rabbi Hillel Klavan recalled how Rabbi Burnstein had mentored him in the 1950s when he (Rabbi Klavan) was a young rabbi taking over his recently deceased father's pulpit in Washington. Rabbi Klavan's recollection is reminiscent of one of the repeated themes that I heard while researching this article: the cooperation and friendship among the members of the Vaad as they fought their common enemy — the impending death of Orthodox Judaism in Washington.

In the realm of interpersonal relations, Rabbi Burnstein's son-in-law, Mr. Eddie Steinberg of Teaneck, NJ, shared two of the life lessons he learned from his father-in-law: "Once, when I was writing a check to pay a *frum Yid* (Orthodox Jew) who had gone well beyond the call of duty in performing a service for me, my father-in-law (Rabbi Burnstein) suggested, 'Write him a note, too. It will mean more to him than the check.'

"On another occasion," Mr. Steinberg wrote, "my father-in-law sensed that I was feeling good about something I had done for another person. He commented softly, 'Chesed is measured, not by how much you do, but by how much the recipient needs.'"⁴

Rebbetzin Celia (Spiegel) Burnstein passed away in 1972.

Rabbi Harry (Yehoshua Heschel) Kaufman *shlita* (*standing, second from left*)

The highlight of researching this article was meeting Rabbi Kaufman, now a centenarian living in Lakewood, NJ. Rabbi Kaufman was born (in his words) on "Chai (18) Teves," 1923, in Tarnopol,

⁴ E. Steinberg, *Between Mincha and Maariv*, p. 7 (Kislev 5781).

Poland — in the very house where his ancestor, Rabbi Yosef Babad *zt”l* (1801–1874, author of the classic work *Minchas Chinuch*) had lived. The future Rabbi Kaufman arrived in America at age six and his family settled on the Lower East Side. He studied at Yeshiva Torah Vodaath and, in 1948, received *semichah* from Rabbi Moshe Feinstein *zt”l*. Concurrently with his Yeshiva studies, the future Rabbi Kaufman earned an undergraduate degree from Columbia University.

In 1948, Rabbi Kaufman’s friend, Chazzan Sholom Katz *z”l* (no relation to this writer), informed him that Beth Sholom Congregation in Washington was seeking a rabbi. Rabbi Kaufman got the position and led that shul until 1969, first at Eighth and Shepard Streets NW and then at 13th Street and Eastern Avenue NW. Rabbi Kaufman related that Beth Sholom took its name (“House of Peace”) from the fact that it was the product of a merger of several congregations. Most of Beth Sholom’s members during Rabbi Kaufman’s tenure were business people.

In 1950, Rabbi Kaufman married Devorah Gittel Small, the daughter of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein’s sister. My father, Dr. Irving Katz, recalls going to Beth Sholom for a weekday *mincha* and encountering Rabbi Feinstein there. Rebbetzin Kaufman *a”h* passed away on the second day of Shavuos 1993.

Looking at the picture that inspired this article, Rabbi Kaufman recalled the “exceptionally fine” rabbis with whom he served, each of whom “was a significant person in his own right.” Rabbi Kaufman noted that there were no rivalries between the rabbis, which made Washington “unique in this respect.” Although Beth Sholom and Ohev Shalom Talmud Torah (OSTT) were only blocks apart and “should” have been competitors, their two rabbis were exceptionally close, studying Torah together and taking their families on vacation together, according to Rabbi Kaufman’s son, Rabbi Eli Kaufman, rabbi of Congregation Ohav Emeth in Highland Park. (I took a framed copy of the Vaad photo to present to Rabbi Kaufman as a “thank you,” only to discover that it was already hanging in his home in Lakewood, a testament to his positive memories. Rabbi Kaufman also noted with satisfaction that grandchildren of his current wife, the former Rebbetzin Indich of Cleveland, are married to grandchildren of his late colleagues, Rabbis Burnstein and Klavan.)

As President of the Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington, Rabbi Kaufman was a member of President Nixon’s first inaugural committee. Upon being invited to the prayer service that would precede the inauguration, Rabbi Kaufman declined, explaining that he could not enter a church. As a result, the service was moved to the auditorium of the State Department and Rabbi Kaufman did participate.

After Beth Sholom, Rabbi Kaufman served as rabbi of the Young Israel of Montreal. In 2015, he published *Ohr Yehoshua*, containing his original thoughts on the *parashah* and festivals.

Rabbi Philip (Yerucham Fishel Aryeh) Rabinowitz *zt”l* (standing, right)

Rabbi Rabinowitz was born in a suburb of Lomza, Poland on December 15, 1920. He studied in the Lomza Yeshiva under Rabbi Eliezer Shulevitz *zt”l*, a student of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter *zt”l*, founder of the Mussar movement. In July 1938, the future Rabbi Rabinowitz came to America and studied under Rabbi Chaim Korb *zt”l* at Hebrew Theological College in Chicago (now known popularly as “Skokie Yeshiva”). In 1945, he received *semichah* from Rabbi Korb.

Though not his formal student, Rabbi Rabinowitz used the term “My Rebbe” when referring to Rabbi Dovid Lifschutz *zt”l*, rabbi of Suvalk, Poland, and later a Rosh Yeshiva in Chicago and at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Rabbinical Seminary of Yeshiva University. A family member related that, when the first hints of the Holocaust reached America, Rabbi Lifschutz was moved by the young Rabbi Rabinowitz’s recitation of *Tehilim*; this led to the development of a close Rebbe-Talmid (mentor-protégé) relationship between them.

Rabbi Rabinowitz’s first rabbinic position was at the Young Israel of Mapleton Park, in Brooklyn, NY, and he taught at the Yeshiva of Flatbush as well. In 1950, he was appointed rabbi of Keshet Israel Congregation in Georgetown. There he focused on three objectives: studying and teaching Torah, sustaining the daily *minyanim*, and watching over the welfare of his community. Keshet Israel had once housed a large Talmud Torah (Sunday school), and Rabbi Rabinowitz worked to keep it alive, first in the shul and, later, in his home. He was described as a “one man show,” leading the prayers, reading the Torah, and announcing the pages (in addition to his rabbinic duties). At times, he would spend two hours on the phone to ensure a weekday *minyan* for *mincha*; then he would send his son to pick up the necessary tenth man. His dedication to his congregants is illustrated by the time he drove seven hours to a Rabbinical Council of America convention in the Catskills, only to receive a message that a congregant had passed away. Rabbi Rabinowitz could have asked another rabbi to officiate in his place, but he did not. He got back in the car and drove the seven hours home.

In addition to his rabbinic duties, Rabbi Rabinowitz taught the 7th and 8th grades at the Academy. A family member recalled that Rabbi Rabinowitz did not have a car and had to take two buses from his home in Georgetown to the school at 16th Street and Fort Stevens Drive NW. Zev Teichman, now living in White Oak, was a student of Rabbi Rabinowitz and recalls his teacher as “soft-spoken” and a “wonderful teacher.” “Everyone was precious to him,” Mr. Teichman said. Others recalled that Rabbi Rabinowitz used to address students as *mein tiere kind* (“my dear child”) — but not because he didn’t know their names. In fact, he remembered his students’ names many years later.

Rabbi Rabinowitz once invited his colleagues from the Academy to a dinner at Keshet Israel. Rabbi William Millen *zt”l* wrote in a 2001 reminiscence that, not seeing place cards, the Hebrew Academy rabbis chose a table in the corner. No, Rabbi Rabinowitz told them: the head table had been set for them. When they balked, Rabbi Rabinowitz said, “This is not about you. It is about *Kavod HaTorah* (honoring the Torah).” No honorees or wealthy donors sat at the head table, only rabbis, Rabbi Millen recalled.

The Rabinowitz home was always open to anyone in need, even strangers. A family member recalled that, until Rabbi Rabinowitz walked into the house, they never knew how many places to set at the table. Tragically, on the evening of February 28, 1984, Rabbi Rabinowitz was murdered in his home, presumably by a wayfarer he had taken in. The crime remains unsolved.

Today, the *eruv* encompassing Georgetown, adjacent neighborhoods, and all of downtown Washington is named in Rabbi Rabinowitz’s memory.

Rebbetzin Selma Rabinowitz *a”h* passed away in 1978.

Rabbi Hillel Klavan zt"l (standing, left)

Rabbi Klavan was born in Kovno, Lithuania on January 10, 1923. As an infant, he immigrated with his family to Burlington, Vermont, where his father, Rabbi Yehoshua Klavan zt"l was rabbi of the Combined Congregations. Moving to Washington in 1935, the elder Rabbi Klavan served as rabbi of Talmud Torah Congregation and was recognized as Washington's unofficial "Chief Rabbi" or *Shtot Rov* (Yiddish for "City Rabbi") until his passing.

Rabbi Hillel Klavan received his *semichah* from Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore in approximately 1950, after which he assumed his first rabbinical post in Brooklyn, NY. Fifty or so years later, after his retirement from the rabbinate, Rabbi Klavan would return to Ner Israel for the High Holidays. Several Ner Israel alumni have described to this writer the respect with which Rabbi Klavan would be greeted by Rabbi Herman Neuburger zt"l, the venerable President of that Yeshiva.

The elder Rabbi Klavan passed away in July 1953, and his youngest son, Rabbi Hillel Klavan, came to Washington to succeed him. (Another son, Mr. Harry Klavan z"l, was a DC lawyer and an active lay leader in the community.)

In 1958, Congregation Talmud Torah merged with Ohev Shalom. Rabbi Klavan led the combined congregation, OSTT, for the next half-century, during which time OSTT moved uptown from 14th and Emerson Streets NW to 16th and Jonquil Streets NW. Rabbi Klavan was known for his charm, his practical common sense, and his ability to connect with non-religious Jews and even gentiles — all while remaining true to the *mesorah* (traditions) that his father had learned from the *Gedolim* (great sages) who were his mentors in Europe. Rabbi Klavan also served as President of the Vaad for many years, remaining active as Honorary President until his passing.

Rabbi Klavan is remembered by Dr. Lee Spetner, now of Yerushalayim, as being the first DC rabbi to endorse the founding of the Yeshiva High School ("YHS" — now the Yeshiva of Greater Washington or "YGW"). At the time, the Academy did not include a high school and the existing high school, Ohr Torah, did not attract many students. Instead, most children who wanted to continue their Jewish education went out of town. In 1961, at a meeting of the local HaPoel Mizrachi chapter, Rabbi Klavan spoke about the need for a new Jewish high school in Washington. Dr. Spetner recalled that one parent, Mr. Elazar Kaufman (a teacher at the Academy), referred to it as a "Yeshiva" high school, and many of the other parents present did not know what the word "Yeshiva" meant.

When I was a child in the early 1970s, my family attended OSTT on Friday nights. My clearest childhood memory of Rabbi Klavan is his recitation of *Krias Shema*, carefully enunciating each word in his deep voice long after the congregants had completed their own recitations. In particular, I can still hear Rabbi Klavan's emphasis of the letter *zayin* in the word *tizkeru* (see *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 61:17). Incredibly, the same memory was shared with me by Mrs. Chana (Kasachkoff) Poupko, now of Yerushalayim, who attended Congregation Talmud Torah on Friday nights during Rabbi Klavan's first years there. Mrs. Poupko also recalls how much it meant to her that Rabbi Klavan greeted her enthusiastically, by name, every Friday night, though she was in her words, "a seven year old nobody." In truth, she was not a "nobody" — as all the rabbis

profiled here viewed connecting with children as a major part of their task to save Judaism in Washington.

Rabbi Klavan lived his final years in Kemp Mill, *davening* at Shomrai Emunah and YGW, and regularly attending Rabbi Anemer's Wednesday night Gemara shiur. Many were thus privileged to witness the mutual respect these two rabbis had for each other. Rabbi Rosen recalls Rabbi Klavan, in his late 80s, studying Gemara at YGW through the night on Shavuot. Rabbi Rosen said: "He was *mechayev* us (set a high standard for younger, healthier people to meet)" (compare Yoma 35b).

Rabbi Klavan passed away on March 14, 2016. Rebbetzin Myrna (Jaray) Klavan *a"h* continued to live in Kemp Mill until her passing on August 26, 2021.

Rabbi Gedaliah Anemer *zt"l* (*standing, second from right*)

Rabbi Anemer was born in Akron, Ohio, on March 19, 1932. At a very young age, after the tragic passing of his father, he followed his older brother to Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's yeshiva on New York's Lower East Side. Rabbi Anemer would later recall that a bus ticket from New York to his home in Ohio cost five dollars; he earned part of the money by passing a test on his learning and then borrowed the rest from Rabbi Feinstein.

From 1944 to 1956, the future Rabbi Anemer attended Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, where he was a close student of Rabbi Elya Meir Bloch *zt"l*, who had transplanted the yeshiva from Europe. Rabbi Anemer received *semichah* at a young age in 1952. While in Telshe, Rabbi Anemer taught a high school class. He used to recall ironically that he, a staunch Litvak (non-Chassid), taught a class that included four future Chassidic rebbes. Upon leaving Telshe, Rabbi Anemer helped establish, and served as Rosh Yeshiva of, the Boston Rabbinical Seminary. That yeshiva reached its peak enrollment of 300 in the late 1950s but eventually closed.

In September 1957, Rabbi Anemer was named rabbi of Shomrai Emunah Congregation (YISE), then meeting in Chillum, Maryland. A sign of the times is that Shomrai was seeking a rabbi with an academic degree. Unfazed, Rabbi Anemer told the search committee members, "You have enough degrees between you. You need someone who will teach you Torah and answer your halachic questions." Rabbi Dr. Hersh Mendlowitz was one of the few yeshiva-educated members of that committee. He related that Rabbi Anemer impressed him, even then, as someone capable of being a *posek* (halachic authority who could decide difficult and novel questions).

Shortly after joining Shomrai Emunah, Rabbi Anemer moved his young family to 806 Whittington Terrace, behind the present-day YISE Preschool, and began holding services in his home. Mr. Joel Becker recalls going to the Anemer home on Friday afternoons as an eleven-year-old to set up chairs for the *minyan*, after which Rabbi Anemer would learn with him until his parents picked him up. In the beginning, Rabbi Anemer would walk the 6.5 miles to the official shul building at 5701 Eastern Avenue, on the boundary of DC and Prince George's County, on Shabbos morning. Eventually, congregants started moving closer to Rabbi Anemer's new home, thus planting the seeds of what was to become the Kemp Mill Jewish community.

Along with Rabbi Klavan, Rabbi Anemer was one of only two Vaad members who enthusiastically supported the founding of YHS, which opened in 1963 with six girls. (The boys' division opened the following year with ten students.) Dr. Spetner related that the other local rabbis worried that the school would be a financial burden or that it would not remain Orthodox. Rabbi Anemer quickly became the dominant figure in YHS and led it for the next 45 years as the Dean and Rosh HaYeshiva. The school is now named Yeshiva of Greater Washington-Tiferes Gedaliah in Rabbi Anemer's memory.⁵

Rabbi Anemer's love of Torah learning was demonstrated for this writer by the following incident: Rabbi Anemer took great pride in the fact that he had encouraged me to publish *Hamaayan/The Torah Spring*, a weekly compilation of *Divrei Torah*, and he read it regularly. In approximately 2003, Rabbi Anemer told me, "You answered a question I have had on the *haftarah* since 1951!" He then proceeded to relate the exact circumstances under which the question arose, including whose home he had eaten at on that Shabbos 52 years earlier. Only a truly unique Torah scholar could be "bothered" by a question on the *haftarah* to that extent.

Rabbi Anemer married Yocheved Balgley in 1954. Rabbi Anemer passed away on Rosh Chodesh Iyar in 2010. Rebbetzin Anemer *she'tichyeh* now lives with her daughter in Baltimore and continues to enjoy a warm relationship with many former congregants.

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In the 1950s and 60s, shuls were still "hanging on for dear life," in Rabbi Tzvi Rosen's words. The Hebrew Academy's founding had been a "game-changer" and had "changed the complexion" of the community, but the fight to keep the community's children interested in Judaism was ongoing.

This is starkly illustrated by the Vaad's public statement before Pesach 1957, calling upon Washington's Jewish parents to see that their children "experience to the fullest extent the inspiration, the joy, and the infinite spiritual enrichment which the proper observance of our Jewish festivals makes possible." The statement added: "Therefore we urge you to see to it that your children stay out of public school during the Passover holidays and instead attend religious services in their respective synagogues on those days."

In a 1960 Pesach message, Vaad President Rabbi Kaufman felt the need to declare, "[W]e appeal to Jewish parents to help make a brighter future for their children by striving to give them a maximum awareness and knowledge of Judaism." Sixty-three years later, Rabbi Kaufman expressed great surprise when I told him that a Washington area child can now study Torah here starting in nursery school and continuing through *kollel*, long after marriage. We should be, as Rabbi Kaufman was, very pleased to know that the Greater Washington Jewish community is now "firmly entrenched in the Torah world."

And these are some of the leaders whom we should thank.

⁵ Much of Rabbi Anemer's impact on the community occurred after the period on which this article focuses and will not be elaborated upon here.