

# Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School in the News

Contributed by webtools  
Thursday, 06 September 2012

The Open and Modern Orthodox Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School Begins Transition to New President Founder and President Rav Avi Weiss Transferring Leadership of the Yeshiva to Rav Asher Lopatin NEW YORK — Known for combining a rigorous, traditional approach to Jewish text with an innovative curriculum and openness, the open Orthodox Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School (YCT) today announced that Founder and President Rav Avi Weiss will be handing over the Presidency of the yeshiva to Rav Asher Lopatin of Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation, effective July 2013. Rav Lopatin will be working closely with Rav Weiss during the first year transition phase.

“This transition marks the proudest moment in any leadership with which I’ve ever been involved,” says Weiss, who also is a senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a congregation of 850 families, and co-founder of the International Rabbinic Fellowship. “It moves YCT out of its founding stage into the realm of institutional viability which, God willing, will endure for many, many years to come. For this reason, I have been urging the Board over the past few years for this transition and feel so blessed and ecstatic that Rabbi Asher Lopatin has agreed to become the next president. I am deeply grateful to the Jim Joseph Foundation, whose guidance and grant to YCT were instrumental in realizing this goal.” “I intend to go back to doing what I love most — teaching, writing and mentoring. I will also now have the opportunity to continue cultivating the ideas of open Orthodoxy and taking it to another level,” Weiss added. Considered a pioneer in the field of rabbinic education, Rav Weiss has been named one of the fifty most influential rabbis in America by Newsweek magazine for six consecutive years. Since founding YCT in 1999, he has cultivated an environment where academic excellence was the norm and character and Jewish leadership skills of its students were held to the highest standards. Rabbi Weiss will continue to teach at YCT. “In recent years we have been the greatest feeders of rabbis and Jim Joseph Foundation educators on campus, in community day schools, camps and Jewish national leadership organizations including Uri L’Tzedek, The Samuel Bronfman Foundation and Kevah,” commented Rabbi Weiss. “In addition, our rabbis are now leading major synagogues all over the country. Of our more than 80 graduates, almost 95 percent are in avodat hakosh [holy work] - an unbelievably high percentage of our graduates leading the Jewish community.” Rav Lopatin, a former Rhodes Scholar and Wexner Fellow, has been spiritual leader of Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation in Chicago for 17 years, and has helped the synagogue grow from 90 members to over 400 members. He is known as being a national leader in working together with Jews of all different backgrounds and denominations to build Jewish community and create a passion for Torah and Jewish practice. He received his ordination from Rav Aron Soloveichik and Yeshivas Brisk and from Yeshiva University in New York. He holds an MPhil in Medieval Arabic Thought from Oxford University, as well as a Bachelor’s in International Relations and Islamic Studies from Boston University. He has done doctoral work, also at Oxford, in Islamic Fundamentalist Attitudes Toward Jews. He has also been on the Newsweek list three times and his synagogue was selected by Newsweek as one of the 20 most innovative in the nation. Together with his wife, Rachel, Rav Lopatin helped found the halachic and inclusive Chicago Jewish Day School, a pluralistic school with almost 200 students, including the four Lopatin kids. “I am incredibly humbled by the selection committee’s decision and am looking forward to the unique opportunity and challenges ahead,” says Rav Lopatin. “By cultivating a YCT family, Rav Weiss has built an institution representing the best of Orthodox Judaism — knowledge, engagement, and openness. I will do everything I can to continue this legacy, to help our students achieve their highest goals, and to enable our musmachim - ordainees - to impact not only the entire spectrum of the Orthodox world, but to reach beyond boundaries to our brothers and sisters in the wider Jewish world, wherever they may be.” Rav Weiss added: “I am thrilled that Rav Lopatin has agreed to become the new leader of YCT. He has the expertise and skills to move YCT beyond the first stage of development and into a new era of growth. I can think of no rabbi more worthy or capable to be Chovevei’s visionary leader. It is a tremendous z’chut to have him join us.” “Rav Weiss built YCT into an educational institution that has taught students to question, to crave new understandings, and to embrace all kinds Jews and non-Jews alike,” says Steven Lieberman, Chairman of the Board at YCT. “During the last year, we have implemented a plan designed to make this transition as seamless as possible, to ensure that YCT and our students retain these defining characteristics. Rav Weiss’s wisdom, humility, grace, and guidance through this entire process were integral parts in the selection of Rav Lopatin as his successor. We know that he will continue to maintain the high standards and unique vision for which YCT is known.” “We are very excited to welcome Rav Lopatin into the YCT family and know that he will continue Rav Weiss’s legacy of inspiring, educating, and promoting intellectual growth,” adds Rabbi Dov Linzer, Dean of YCT. The development and implementation of the succession plan was a component of a 2011 \$3 million grant that YCT received from the Jim Joseph Foundation. The five-year grant, of which \$2.5 million is being matched on a one-to-one basis with the Yeshiva’s own fundraising, enables YCT to create greater numbers of dynamic, uniquely prepared Orthodox pulpit and campus rabbis and Jewish educators. The grant funded the development of a fully-realized educator’s track, which graduates ordained rabbis with the same approach to bridge-building and openness as other YCT programs. “The Jim Joseph Foundation awarded a grant to YCT because of its stellar record in creating highly effective and innovative Jewish educators and leaders,” adds Al Levitt, President of the Jim Joseph Foundation. “As a partner with YCT, developing a strategic and timely succession plan to identify Rav Weiss’s successor was a core component of the grant. We believe that this plan, and the subsequent transition phase, will allow YCT to build on its past successes. We enjoy a very close, collaborative relationship with Rav Weiss, and we look forward to fostering a similar relationship with

Rav Lopatin. YCT is widely admired for its approach to the role of the rabbi in Jewish life and society at large, as rabbinical students are prepared to engage both with the Jewish community and with the secular society. Graduates of YCT seek to build bridges, share knowledge, and collaborate with those from other Jewish denominations and beyond. Since its inception, YCT has ordained more than 80 rabbis. Most recently all eight of the members of its 2012 graduating class have found positions as rabbis. This year's graduates will be working in the following positions: Rabbi Aaron Braun – Rabbi, Northbrook Community Synagogue. Chicago, IL Rabbi Gabriel Greenberg – Jim Joseph Foundation Senior Jewish Educator, University of California, Berkeley Hillel. Berkeley, CA Rabbi Mordechai Harris – Teen Rabbi & Outreach Director, Baron Hirsch Congregation. Memphis, TN Rabbi Ari Hart – Assistant Director of Recruitment, YCT and Assistant Rabbi, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. Riverdale, NY Rabbi Simon Livson – Chief Rabbi, Jewish Community of Finland. Helsinki, Finland Rabbi Daniel Passow – Orthodox Rabbi, Columbia/Barnard Hillel. New York, NY Rabbi Michael Stein – Judaic Studies Faculty, Heschel High School. New York, NY Rabbi Joshua Strosberg – Rabbi, Kehillat Ohr Tzion. Buffalo, NY In addition to the YCT graduate at Berkeley, Aaron Lerner has assumed the position of the Jim Joseph Foundation Senior Jewish Educator at UCLA. Across the country and around the world, this has been one of YCT's most successful years for alumni placement. Seven of the YCT alumni (including YCT's 2012 graduates, above) will be going to pulpits which are new to YCT – four of which boast a membership of more than 500 families. Recent alumni moves include: Rabbi Yonah Berman – Rabbi, Kadimah - Toras Moshe. Brighton, MA Rabbi Benjamin Greenberg – Rabbi, BMH-BJ Congregation. Denver, CO Rabbi David Kasher – Director of Education, Kevah Adult Education. Berkeley, CA Rabbi Alexander Kaye – Tikvah Post-Doctoral Fellow in Jewish Thought at Princeton University. Princeton, NJ Rabbi Ari Leubitz – Head of School, Oakland Hebrew Day School. Oakland, CA Rabbi Daniel Levitt – Director of Jewish Life on Campus, University of Guelph, Ontario, CA Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz – Rabbi, Kehilath Israel. Overland Park, KS YCT has 13 students in its Fall 2012 first year class – the largest in its history. ### According to Steven Lieberman, the Chairman of YCT's Board, YCT continues to grow in size and stature: Newsweek Magazine has, again, paid tribute to YCT by including Rabbi Linzer, Rabbi Weiss and, for the first time, Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz, (YCT '10), among its Top 50 Rabbis. YCT recently expanded community learning opportunities with: a week-long "End of Life Medical Ethics Conference" for rabbinical students, faculty and members of the medical and rabbinic communities; Lishma, a serious adult kollel of chevruta study and shiurim, meeting for six hours a week in our Beit Midrash; an extended Yemei Iyun, which was lengthened to offer an additional evening at Drisha in Manhattan; and The Meorot Fellowship for college students and recent graduates which meets weekly from October through December. Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva and Dean of YCT, recently convened a modern Orthodox Siyum HaShas in which men and women celebrated the completion of the study of the entire Talmud. One of our largest and strongest entering classes begins to learn this fall with 13 students. The class includes a Harvard educated lawyer from Paul, Weiss and a Tikvah Scholar/doctoral candidate in Philosophy of Jewish Religion from the University of Toronto. By investing in promising Jewish education grant initiatives, the Jim Joseph Foundation seeks to foster compelling, effective Jewish learning experiences for young North American Jews. Established in 2006, the Jim Joseph Foundation has awarded \$265 million in grants to engage, educate, and inspire young Jewish minds to discover the joy of living vibrant Jewish lives