

**THE CHARLOTTE JEWISH NEWS**

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 Lubavitch of N.C.....Rabbi Yossi Groner, Director  
 Editor.....Rita Mond  
 Advertising.....Blanche Yarus

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**Guest Editorial**

**My Last Farewell**

By Marvin Bienstock

This will be the last issue of *The Charlotte Jewish News* for which I will write.

Each month, year in and year out, I have written stories, articles, editorials, photo captions and advertisements. Each month I have been guilty of missing the submission deadline and of forcing Rita Mond to work even harder in her capacity as volunteer editor. Rita, consider this a formal apology!

Rita and I have been a mutual support system through all these long years. Together we have planned, worked, complained, commiserated and celebrated.

Rita has been a marvelous teacher. She has taught me journalism, printing, design, publishing and the true meanings of dedication and patience. To have done what she has done for as long as she has done it, and with nationally recognized competence, has taken dedication and patience beyond measure.

In this modern world, media and marketing are the determinants of success in both business and non-profit undertakings. Rita is an expert in both, and should be valued, honored and actively courted to continue to make her contribution to the future of this Jewish community.

**On The Issues ... By Ira Gissen, Va/NC Director ADL**

**Ben-Gurion Centennial**

To mark the centennial of the birth of David Ben-Gurion, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has published an eight-page tabloid newspaper of the life and career of Israel's founding father and first prime minister.

Titled "Ben-Gurion Centennial, Resource Unit on a Man and a Nation", it was prepared by ADL in cooperation with the David Ben-Gurion Centennial Committee of the United States. The publication includes accounts of Ben-Gurion's arrival in Palestine in

1906 and his leadership role in bringing the State of Israel into existence; a chronology of his life; a timeline tracing his career together with salient events in world history, and maps showing the Palestine Mandate, the United Nations partition plan, and Israel today.

The newspaper, which features datelined stories ranging from 1897 to 1963, is intended as a resource for students, teachers, librarians, and civic and religious leaders. It contains keynote articles by

Burton S. Levinson, ADL's national chairman, and Nathan Perlmutter, the League's national director.

In his article entitled "Why Study Ben-Gurion?", Mr. Levinson declares that unlike Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill who presided over long-established nations, all Ben-Gurion had was the challenge of a 2,000-year-old dream to carve a homeland out of a desert. "Ben-Gurion," Mr. Levinson said, "has much to teach us about courage and leadership and the search for peace."

In his article, "The Spark of Inspiration", Mr. Perlmutter writes that Ben-Gurion "stands alongside other great immortals of the past whose wisdom and deeds are treasured — prophets and patriots, rabbis and sages, warriors and kings...his life story is an enduring legacy which will touch the minds and hearts of generations to come."

Single copies of "Ben-Gurion Centennial" are available at \$1.00 each, to cover postage and handling, from Publications Department, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

Next issue - Aug.  
 Deadline - July 10



**Lubavitch Here, Lubavitch Now .....**

By Rabbi Marc Wilson

*This editorial was received a little too late to be included in last month's issue. In the interim it appeared in Temple Israel's bulletin. We are printing it here so everyone in the community will have the opportunity to read it.*

I have never been in a Jewish community that hasn't had a passionate ambivalence toward Lubavitch, the Chasidic group that specializes in outreach to Jews who are isolated or alienated from Judaism. Lubavitch is simultaneously lauded for its tireless efforts in reaching Jews that no one else seems able to reach, and denounced for its "cultic" overtones and fundamentalistic world view. Its recent attempt to forestall the growth of Conservative and Reform Judaism in Israel gives new reason for concern.

My eyes are wide open to the shortcomings and foibles of Lubavitch. Nonetheless, I unshamedly nonet myself among their supporters.

More often than not, our disdain for Lubavitch is just a smokescreen for the inadequacy we feel when we compare our pallid achievements to their boundless conviction and determination. While the mainstream of the Jewish

community is beset by apathy and indifference, Lubavitch is aggressively seeking out fellow Jews wherever and whomever they may be. While the mainstream of the Jewish community gets bogged down in tail-chasing feasibility studies and parliamentary procedure, Lubavitch rushes in where the rest of us fear to tread. While the mainstream community is forever apologizing for fear of being typified as "too Jewish", Lubavitch is proud and unapologetic for what it represents. Lubavitch succeeds in reaching the unreachable because while we talk, they act; while we dither over who-reports-to-whom, they take initiative.

Lubavitch is often able to open the door to people who are wary of the motives of the Jewish establishment or who have been turned off by the sometimes pretentious and hypocritical ways that it does its dealings. I am happy that Lubavitch is there to deal with

the misguided young Jew who winds up in Jews for Jesus, or the Jewish drug addict, or prisoner, or those who are simply estranged from the mainstream. Lubavitch presents itself as sincere, authentic and unjudgmental, and it is. Lubavitch does immeasurable good in bringing concern, warmth and Yiddishkeit to Jews that no one else seems able to reach. If their success "scares" us, perhaps we should start examining what they are doing right and force ourselves to rethink some of our standard namby-pamby proposals for Jewish survival and outreach that time and again die on the vine.

No, I do not agree with everything that Lubavitch does. I am particularly concerned by its attitude toward Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel. I accept, however, the sincerity of their position, and I admire the Rebbe for promptly and boldly denouncing the few isolated acts of violence that were associated with the Lubavitch position. It makes the Lubavitch position no more acceptable, but it does point up the basic integrity of their stance. At least we know that we are dealing with "menschen", not half-crazed

lunatics.

We also need to be careful when we denigrate Lubavitch as "just another cult". Cults are a little like pornography. We can't define it, but we know it when we see it. I have seen Lubavitch as an outsider and an insider, and I know it is remarkably free of the neurotic elements that would make it just another cult like the Moonies or Jews for Jesus. Yes, the adulation of the Rebbe is disturbing. But, on balance, seven generations of Lubavitcher Rebbes have been singularly decent, moral, insightful, self-sacrificial leaders whose ultimate accountability has been to the rule of Torah. It is inconceivable that any Lubavitcher Rebbe would incite his disciples to violate Jewish religious or ethical law, and it is equally inconceivable that the disciples, despite their abiding devotion, would tolerate any such fraud.

"What would you do if the Rebbe told you to jump out the window?" we like to ask the resident Lubavitcher.

"The Rebbe would never tell me to jump out the window," is the standard response.

Logically, the answer is circular and evasive. When one has witnessed Lubavitch from within, however, the answer is

perfectly plausible. The Rebbe wouldn't tell a disciple to do something destructive of self or others or he wouldn't be the Rebbe. The Baghwan and Rev. Moon use their disciples for self-aggrandizing purposes. The Lubavitcher Rebbe is a study in self-nullification and humility.

I confess to my bias. Lubavitch was there when I needed them. They helped me immensely in my Jewish growth, and they never asked anything in return. There are times I think I moved away from Lubavitch because my theology evolved beyond their fundamentalistic world view and Rebbe-veneration. There are other times I think it is because I could not withstand the demands of self-sacrificial dedication that make for their way of life. It makes me respect the Rabbi Groners and Weisses of the world all the more.

There will always be things about Lubavitch that are unacceptable to us and issues about which we will simply not be able to agree. But, all things considered, they do incalculable good, particularly in places where we, the "mainstream", either have not or cannot. All things considered, they deserve our support.