

Around the LOCAL NEWS Community



8th graders from Yeshiva Darchei Torah baking matzahs at the Horsteipel Matzah Bakery in Brooklyn. The Rebbe shown is Rabbi Binyomin Wielgus.

A Treasure for Klal Yisroel

Historians studying our generation centuries from now will undoubtedly conclude that we were the hyperbolic generation. Let's be honest. How many events or occurrences have not been hyped by some breathless journalist (myself included) as historic, one of a kind, or some other over-the-top rhetorical spasm? Is there anyone out there who has not yet been billed as a rising star or a transformational figure? Don't worry, your turn is coming.

In light of all that, I'm pleased to present to you one of the most unique individuals you will ever meet. Wait, wait, I'll back it up. This man is a thoroughly Chassidische Yid, yet he speaks 11 different languages and scripts. Count 'em. And no, we are not referring to every day languages spoken across the globe, but dialects that have not been used by common folk for thousands of years. Egyptian hieroglyphics, Greek Latin, Roman Latin, Ksav Ivri, the list goes on. This man is intimately familiar with the process of recovering shipwrecks from the bottom of the sea, has served countless gedolim and has raised more money for a special project than many people see in a lifetime. Meet Rabbi Shaul Shimon Deutsch, founder and curator of the Living Torah Museum.

By now it is hard to find a frum individual in the tri-state area who hasn't heard of the Museum, with its vast display of objects and artifacts long deemed obsolete but very relevant to understanding many parts of the Torah. The curiosity bug bit Rabbi Deutsch as a young boy and really hasn't let go. "I remember being kicked out of class as a child for asking my Rebbe to explain exactly what a kad is, mentioned in Bava

Kamma, in the beginning of the third perek. He must have thought I was wasting time with needless questions, but I really wanted to know what it looked like. Standing outside my classroom, the Menahel walked by and I told him why I was out of class. He told me in Yiddish, 'When you'll get older you'll understand.' Well, I'm taking him at his word. I'm older now, and still trying to understand."

Once the idea of opening a museum was planted in his mind, Rabbi Deutsch wouldn't let go. The problem, as it often is, was money. Antiques such as these are inordinately expensive. But where there is a will there is a way. Rabbi Deutsch has raised \$30 million to accumulate the vast collection of pieces in his display cases. And the collection just keeps on growing. Acknowledged as the most comprehensive museum of its kind, the Biblical Archeological Review, the world's largest Archeological publication declared that the Living Torah Museum "has done what no one else in the United States (perhaps in the world outside of Israel) has done. ... All the big shots, all the people with access to the most sophisticated knowledge and current excavations, have not accomplished what Rabbi Deutsch has."

One of the best resources for discovering these ancient objects are by deep sea diving, men who are hired to recover items from shipwrecks often come across some fascinating discoveries. Rabi Deutsch relates one such



instance. "There is a machlokes among the Rishonim about the measure of a litra, a measurement used in the time of the Gemara. Rashi, the Rambam and the Rif all have different shitos as to the size of this shiur. Well, one day, I found out that some divers had discovered an actual lead litra measurement. If you remember your tenth grade chemistry lessons, you might recall that lead and gold are some of the objects that aren't affected by water, so we were able to accept the measurement as is. It turned out to be exactly the measurement given by Rashi. When I told this to Rav Elyashiv, zt'l, he said he would now pasken this way with regard to the shiur of litra, which is still nogeia today to some of the laws of eirubin. There is another halacha that necessitates knowledge of the shiur of the width of a dinar zahav. The Bais Yosef in Yoreh De'ah says that since those coins were all non-existent (they were melted down by the Romans) we do not know the shiur. Recently, divers recovered a cache that contained some of these coins. We purchased them and

have them at the museum. I received numerous phone calls from poskim who wanted to see these coins themselves."

A second wing of the museum, called Torah Animal World, was added a few years ago, to correct common misconceptions found throughout the Jewish world. "There are so many shitos about a lot of the animals spoken about in the Torah. What's a tzvi? A deer, right? That's what most people think. But the

truth is, Rashi says it's a gazelle. Some think it's an ibex. Do you know the difference between these animals? At the Animal World, we got all of these animals taxidermied and displayed, so people can see for themselves what an akko or dishon is, or to understand exactly what type of scales make a fish kosher. There is a lot to learn."

The museum's Lakewood location opened several years ago, and is part of the broader network of museums, with the others located in Borough Park and the Catskills. "They really complement each other. The Brooklyn location features artifacts and animals mentioned in the Chumash, the Catskills site focuses on the Mishna, and Lakewood hosts the Gemara presentations. There is almost no overlap, aside from an isolated object here or there that is mentioned in more than one place."

So that's it. I made my case. Is there someone in your neighborhood who reads Phoenician? I didn't think so. *Reprinted from the Yated.*