

In search of the living, two sons of Jacob visit the Lake Region



Journal Photo/Louise Oleson

Rabbis Cheskel Rothman (left) and Yudi Steiner pose at the gate to the Sons of Jacob cemetery located near Garske, N.D.

Rabbinic pair brings Judaism to the Dakotas

By Louise Oleson
Journal Managing Editor

There was an unusual sight in the fields just north of Devils Lake last week. Two young rabbis clutching prayer books were framed against the prairie sky, just before sunset.

They came seeking the living, but ended up praying for the dead. Finding no Jews in the city of Devils Lake two student rabbis who visited the area last week were very interested in the old Jewish cemetery north of town.

For their "summer vacation" Rabbis Yudi Steiner and

Cheskel Rothman are traveling throughout North and South Dakota searching for Jews who live in small towns and rural areas. Their mission is to bring the light and life of the Torah to their brothers and sisters who may be isolated from the Jewish community out in rural America.

They are followers of the Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson who founded a movement of outreach to Jews around the world - a Jewish "Peace Corps."

They come equipped with brochures about their mission

and materials to use in providing education for their people.

Upon finding no living Jewish people in the city, the pair asked to visit the Sons of Jacob cemetery located north and east of Garske, N.D.

As the pair walked among the graves of their people they were struck by the kindness of those who care for the little plot of land. "There are no Jews living around here anymore and yet look at how well cared-for this place is," Rabbi Rothman remarked.

See Rabbis/Page 10



Journal Photo/Louise Oleson

Many of the graves in the Jewish cemetery have home-made headstones or markers. This one, however, is a commercially made stone inscribed in Hebrew.

Rabbis/ from page 1

Volunteers from the area have collected funds for a permanent marker to be placed on the site of the old cemetery. A ceremony on September 17 will honor the original Jewish homesteaders and dedicate the mon-

ument to the original founders of the Garske colony.

One by one the rabbis visited each marked grave crouching down to read the inscriptions on the old headstones and markers. As their visit ended they prayed a Jewish prayer and Rothman wondered how long has it been since a Jewish prayer was spoken in this land?

Rothman and Steiner are part of a worldwide program, where some 230 young rabbis and senior rabbinical students will visit, to name just a few places; Bolivia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia, Fiji, Guadeloupe, Ireland, Portugal, Sri Lanka and Uruguay.

Sometimes, the only way to locate the Jews is by guesswork in the local telephone book. "We do a lot of different programs, sometimes Torah classes, sometimes Kosher dinners and other times both, all of which are great, but my personal feeling is that the stuff that has the most meaningful effect is the one-on-one conversations," said Steiner. "Many people approach seeking advice on how to maintain a Jewish identity, especially for their children, in places devoid of any real Jewish infrastructure."

Merkos Linyonei Chinuch, the educational arm of the Lubavitch movement, sponsors the outreach program that the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, developed over 50 years ago.

For more information call the numbers listed below, or Rabbis Rothman and Steiner at: 917-683-2803. For more information on Chabad-Lubavitch visit www.chabad.org.

