**‏**Thursday 13 Heshvan 5778,

02/11/2017

**TZOHAR ORGANIZATION – ANNUAL PLANNING FOR 2018 – MAIMONIDES FOUNDATION**

TZOHAR’s basic principles are expressed by the three central areas of activity, in which the organization will continue to operate in 2018. Later in this document, we will describe how the activities will be implemented in the following fields:

1. **Political – Public Activity:**

Influencing public opinion, decision makers, the media, legislation and promoting appointments to various public positions in the Rabbinate and other institutions.

1. **Public Leadership, including:**
   * + 1. The Public Council, its purpose to create broad legitimacy for Torah Jewry
       2. A national Torani/halachic ruling research and leadership institute, position papers, a journal, Torah courses, creating a generation of Torani leadership
       3. A multi-year program for training TZOHAR rabbis, introducing them to the organization and its positions.
2. **Grassroots Activity that includes two main areas:**
   1. Personal and Family – weddings, heritage, prenuptial agreements, courses for brides, a Bnei Mitzvah project.
   2. Israeli/ Jewish Identity – The Annual Cycle

In recent years, TZOHAR has continued to promote the following major goals:

TZOHAR strives to promote an Israeli society with a profound and shared Jewish identity that will serve as a source of empowerment, uniting the various sectors of the Jewish People.

The goal is to enlist the Religious Zionist population to strengthen Israel’s Jewish identity, as a basis for empowerment and unity, serving as a major implementer of change:

1. To develop a shared and contemporary Jewish-Israeli spiritual language
2. To create a balance between Religion and State, reflecting Israel’s Jewish and democratic spirit
3. To create a model of a modern religious individual with the ability to completely integrate into Israeli society and maintain fruitful dialogue with all its sectors

**In 2018, we have set for ourselves the following goals, mentioned above:**

1. In the public/political arena, which includes political-public activity promoted by TZOHAR in order to ease and solve the tensions related to the issues of Religion and State, the decision was made to promote the following activities:

* **Kashrut** – Israel’s Kashrut system has, in recent years, been the subject of harsh criticism, especially from business owners. The criticism pertains to a number of issues and primarily stems from a reality in which there is no competition; every food establishment is required to request Kashrut certification from the local rabbinate in the city in which it is located. This criticism has led to disillusionment with the government’s Kashrut system. Many business owners have abandoned Kashrut certification despite their basic, ethical and economic interest in maintaining the laws of Kashrut, because they do not want to interact with the Rabbinate. TZOHAR believes that unless this lack of competition is remedied, the Kashrut system cannot operate properly. A reality in which any rabbi does as he pleases, at times arbitrarily, knowing that the business owner has no leeway to negotiate, is the root of the problem; TZOHAR aims to change this reality. **Consequently, TZOHAR intends to establish an alternative system to demonstrate how Kashrut institutions should operate. The experience gained from the TZOHAR Law (which opened up marriage registration areas for couples) indicates that establishing a suitable alternative leads to public pressure, which in turn, eventually leads to a legislative change. This system will be established only if the required budget can be raised.** Another breakthrough in the Kashrut system involves TZOHAR’s intention to appoint women as Kashrut inspectors. This is groundbreaking since TZOHAR will be paving the way for the unprecedented appointment of women in the religious establishment. This will create a new, far-reaching reality in the religious/rabbinical establishment.

Kashrut is not only an economic/organizational sphere; it also includes other fields in which TZOHAR is involved during the course of the year:

The legal sphere – TZOHAR is involved in this area.

Legislation – TZOHAR has succeeded in blocking legislation by Haredi parties that attempts to exacerbate prevailing circumstances. In Knesset committee deliberations, TZOHAR works behind the scenes with Knesset members, ensuring that they are vigilant, and ensuring that circumstances do not deteriorate further.

* **The Legislative Field** – In the coming year, TZOHAR intends to promote legislation proposing that women constitute between one fifth and one third of the council that elects the Chief Rabbis. This piece of legislation is very complex, and we are uncertain it will succeed.
* **Ethics –** In the short period in which Ethics Center has been in operation, under the leadership of Rabbi Sherlo, it has organized academic conferences and taken part in media events and Torah activities that have influenced public opinion and public policy. The Center has received extensive media exposure and its activities frequent media coverage. The Center’s website will be launched in the coming days. The goal of the website is to publicize daily the information and subjects dealt with by the Ethics Center. The dissemination of information and the Q&A platform for ethical issues are possible only by setting up a website; we have, therefore, worked diligently to this end during the past months. Written material and videos on ethical issues will be uploaded to the website in the coming days.

**Another goal related to the activity of the Ethics Center –** Through collaboration with rabbis from overseas, we intend to expand the activity of this division, seeking to provide answers to Jewish ethical issues that concern Jewish communities overseas. This area of activity is currently being examined and we are currently gathering information in order to develop it in a professional manner.

1. **Public leadership – including the training of rabbis in Israel and overseas:**
2. Conference for Community rabbis from Israel and abroad – In recent years, we have witnessed a dialogue marked by extremism and virulence, which at times includes clashes between religious ideologies. Due to the impact of the rabbinical leaders on their communities, we have reached the conclusion that there is a need to create an educational training framework, which is inclusive and open. The goal is to train a generation of rabbis capable of properly coping with the challenges of the modern era. The many challenges facing the Religious Zionist sector are of concern to both Israeli and Diaspora rabbis. The many changes that have transpired in the family and community spheres, trends of religious/national and political extremism with no interest in engaging in dialogue with those who are different, and the serious assimilation that is spreading throughout the overseas communities that also impact communities in Israel, are only some of the examples of the complexity we face as rabbis and leaders. In order to improve our ability to cope with these challenges, TZOHAR has joined with the Maimonides Foundation to organize an international conference for Israeli and North American Rabbis. The conference, to be held on February 20–22 at the Daniel Hotel in Herzliya, was created to provide solutions to issues of the modern era, which are dealt with by the spiritual leaders of Israeli and Diaspora communities, equipping them with better tools. At the conference, the rabbis will discuss these issues, learning from each other’s experiences. We believe that this encounter between rabbis from different places will foster opportunities to identify trends evolving in Jewish communities in Israel and overseas. Listening to the different voices will provide all of us with important tools for our rabbinical and community work.
3. Training rabbis in Israel – Recently, there have also been far-reaching developments in this field. Fortunately, we have received a preliminary authorization for a grant of $250,000 for a 3-year period, from a Los Angeles foundation, to assist us with training TZOHAR’s rabbis of the future. Our goal is for these rabbis to become the leaders of Religious Zionism, who are open and more attentive to others in the spirit of TZOHAR’s values, and who will in turn help us achieve the goal of creating a model of a modern religious individual with the ability to fully integrate into and engage in a productive dialogue with all sectors of society.

Aside from the regular professional training described in our reports, we aim to train rabbis in a creative manner, using technological tools that will enable them to stay relevant and have an impact on the future generation using media tools and the social network. The rabbis will be trained to use technology to express and promote their positions, in order to become part of the public domain and consequently, to bridge the growing gaps between various sectors in Israel.

1. **On the Grassroots front, there are two new central developments:**
   * + 1. The Marriage Project – The collaboration with the Tel Aviv Religious Council for the registration of couples wishing to marry and conducting wedding ceremonies has significantly advanced in the past six months, and has recently become official. Pursuant to this collaboration, in November 2017, TZOHAR has been authorized to use the Council’s marriage registration software. As a result, Tel Aviv has joined our successful collaboration with the religious councils of Shoham and Gush Etzion. With G-d’s help, this new collaboration will increase the number of couples we serve each year. This process was carried out sensitively and astutely by the director of the Wedding Division. This collaboration will lead to an increase of another 500 couples married in Jewish weddings per year. Note that TZOHAR intends to make Jewish services accessible to couples in a tolerant fashion, by creating a meaningful experience for couples who get married with TZOHAR. Currently, the focus of the Wedding Division is on how TZOHAR can offer couples a meaningful experience in order to connect the couples to Judaism at other junctures in their future married life.
       2. The Holidays Project – Creating new opportunities for encounters between religious and secular Jews through the celebration of shared holidays. In addition to the continued activity for the holidays that fall in the month of Tishrei and Purim, last year, a joint Tikun Leil Shavuout Learning activity run in private homes was initiated, led by both a religious and secular lecturer. The activity, called “Home Lessons” was run in 15 homes. This year, we intend to expand this activity and to triple the number of homes. We consider this activity an important development that fosters real partnership between the sectors and enables the non-religious population to open their homes and host an activity, leading to a significant expanding of circles.