

## Facing the Future

established Jewish community, where it can be verified that they are adhering to Torah and mitzvah observance. In smaller towns and regions without a sitting bein din, Dayan Chanoch Ehbrentou of London will provide advisory services.

Rabbanim also discussed an initiative the CER is advocating in the Knesset that would give rabbinical courts in Israel authority to place sanctions on recalcitrant husbands who flee from Europe to Israel as a means to persuade them to release their wives from the shackles of their agunah status.

**Land of the Free** Monaco, a land known for its freedoms, was a fitting backdrop for the discussions.

Founded during the sixth century as *Monoikos*, Greek for "single house," its name was meant to convey the ideas of self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

Since 1641, when a treaty was signed providing Monaco the protection of France, the people of the principality have lived prosperously off maritime commerce, profiting from the taxes imposed on ships on their way to Italy.

Today, Monaco has the world's third-highest per capita income at \$115,000 a year – almost double that of the US.

With 38,000 residents in an area of two square kilometers, it is the world's most densely populated country. Its 500-member police force is augmented by a hidden network of CCTV cameras providing nonintrusive security for Monaco's wealthy residents, including many Jewish retirees from France and the UK.

Monaco's many casinos, located in the Monte Carlo section of Monaco, render it the Las Vegas of the Mediterranean. But the style of construction is old-fashioned European, with none of the garish glitz of Vegas.

Monaco is shaped like a semicircular cove along the sea, with jagged gray and beige cliffs making a vertical descent toward the waters below. From a distance,



(Top to bottom) The UK's Chief Rabbi Mirvis, Moscow's Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt, and France's Chief Rabbi Korsia visiting Monaco's Prince Albert at his palace; the monument to the Holocaust victims Monaco turned away; and Paul Packer, chairman of the US Presidential Council for the Preservation of Global Heritage, addressing the conference

Monaco's hotels and homes appear to be carved into the hills.

On the steep streets that include many hairpin turns, open-air, double-decked red tour buses are a common sight. The shops sport fashionable names like Gucci and Cartier.

Yachts of various shapes and sizes dock alongside large cruise ships. A few canoers take advantage of a glorious late November morning to our along the calm sea, with gentle northwest winds at seven miles per hour barely making a ripple.

The Jewish community of Monaco was formally founded in 1948, with the creation of the Association Culturelle Israelite de Monaco.

Two years ago, the association completed conversion of a private villa into a four-story building that houses an Orthodox shul and a community center along with a new mikvah that was dedicated on the second night of this year's conference.

"The mikvah is the revival of the individual, and in Monaco, it represents the revival of the Jewish community," said Rabbi Daniel Torgman, now in his eighth year as Monaco's rabbi. Born in Nice to a third-generation French family, Rabbi Torgman earned his semichah in Jerusalem, where he learned in the kollel of Rav Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg.

Officially, some 170 families are kehillah members. On Yom Kippur, some 350 men and women will pack the corp. circular shul. The steady Shabbos minyan features a sumptuous kiddush afterward. There is a daily minyan for *Shecharia*, plus *miyamin* for *Minchah*, and *Masrim* most of the year. A few Jewish students are enrolled in the International University of Monaco. "I learn Gemaara with one of them every night," Rabbi Torgman noted.

For full-time residents, the Jewish center holds Sunday and Wednesday classes in Hebrew language, the fundamentals of Judaism, and Jewish history, and offers bar and has mitzvah

instruction. One local bakery has a selection of basic kosher breads. Two supermarkets have small kosher sections, although to obtain more than the basics, one must travel a half hour to Nice, which has a Jewish population of 25,000 and several kosher restaurants and stores.

**Short Memories** Rabbi Torgman joined a small delegation of rabbanim led by Rabbi Goldschmidt, the UK's Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, and France's Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia on a visit to the royal palace.

"The fact that you chose to gather here is a badge of honor for me," said Prince Albert, who also noted the fund his government established after his apology two years ago to provide compensation for Monaco's Holocaust victims.

While enhancing relations with the world's tiniest country, the CER also cemented relations with the world's major superpower, signing an agreement of cooperation with the Presidential Council for the Preservation of Global Heritage of the United States to protect and guard cemeteries and historical Jewish institutions throughout Europe.

"When America is strong, Israel is strong, and when Israel is strong, the Jews are strong, and hopefully the next three years [under Trump] will be a time when Israel, the US, and the Jews are strong," said council chairman Paul Packer.

Fear of diminishing US strength under an America First policy is a concern to Jewish leaders in Europe, who rely on the US to defend the very liberties under attack in Europe today.

These concerns prompted Rabbi Goldschmidt, in an interview in London with *Newsweek* earlier this month, to remark: "US foreign policy is going through an isolationist period and the fact that the voice of Washington is not heard on all those issues that have to do with racism [has left] a huge vacuum, in Europe especially."

I asked Rabbi Goldschmidt if he would care to qualify those remarks, since a substantial number of US Orthodox Jews support Trump's attacks on liberal values, and would agree with his America First policy.

Rabbi Goldschmidt didn't back down. "Orthodox Jews in America have forgotten what it means to live in non-democratic countries," he said, noting that European Jews are facing bans on *beis milah* and *shechita*, which US Jews aren't. "This is a religious freedom issue. When the United States was running the world, their voice and their influence mattered. Now they say it's not their problem, it's America first."

Rabbi Goldschmidt noted that 23 years ago, when revelations surfaced of Swiss bank accounts that held money stolen from Holocaust victims, nothing happened until the US stepped in. "So we shouldn't belittle the power of the US government, even today," Rabbi Goldschmidt said. "People who take care of their past are also going to take care of their future." ☺

Mishpacha

# MK HOTELS

EST. 1982

## OPEN THE ENTIRE SEASON!

**24 DECEMBER 2017 – 26 MARCH 2018**

INCLUDING: WINTER HOLIDAYS  
SKI HOLIDAY - PURIM - BEIN HAZMANIM

We look forward to seeing you in Crans Montana!

Crans-Montana, panoramic terrace of the Volas Alps, is located at an altitude of 1500m in Switzerland - only 20 minutes from Sion Airport, two hours from Geneva Airport and three hours from Zurich, Basel or Milano. From the Airport trains run frequently to Montana Station.

**SERVICES:**

- Gfot Kosher Cuisine
- Fully equipped Shul with regular services
- Kids club
- Ski arrangements & advice

0041 79 250 72 70

M. Klein

+32 330 11 600

+32 485 640 498

USA +718 395 9125

info@mkhotels.eu

www.mkhotels.eu

ESTABLISHED 1982

INTERNATIONAL