

Orthodox synagogues' program focuses on anger management

by **Debra Rubin**
NJJN/ Bureau Chief/Middlesex

While anger is a normal human emotion, allowing it to escalate to rage does a disservice to those around you — and to God, according to Rabbi David Bassous.

Bassous, religious leader at Congregation Etz Ahaim in Highland Park, spoke Nov. 12 at Congregation Ahavas Achim, also in Highland Park, in the latest of a series of programs intended to promote “character improvement” within the Orthodox community.

The latest program drew about 75 people, with eight new participants submitting applications to the program, known as Achieving Change Through Torah, or ACTT.

ACTT coordinator Phil Rosen said that brought total program membership to 109, up from an initial 40.

In his talk, Bassous addressed the fourth of seven character traits — anger management for positive results — that are to be included in the program.

“To avoid anger we must recognize rage is evil,” said Bassous. “The person who is angry is causing more harm to himself than to the person on the receiving end of his anger. It causes his blood pres-

sure to rise and heart attacks.... We see anger so often on television that we become insensitive to it.”

Bassous quoted the medieval sage Maimonides, who called anger “an exceedingly bad passion” and advised, “One should avoid it to the last extreme.”

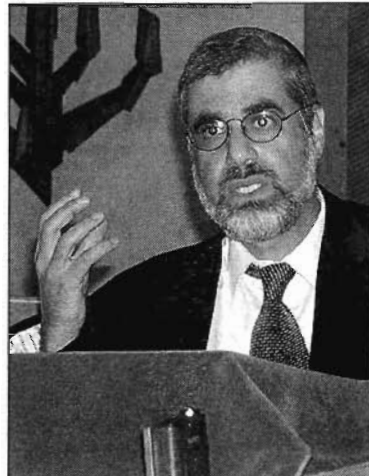
Bassous outlined not only the stages of anger but 34 techniques for controlling it.

Participants were encouraged to learn from people who are able to let go of their anger easily, to count slowly when they feel anger growing, and perhaps to meditate on Hebrew expressions, such as “*Ein od milvado*” — “There is nothing besides God” — in times of stress.

“When we give people honor, we must remember that God created man, not just Jews, in his image,” said Bassous. “If we want respect, we must respect others. When we are in a rage we do not think about God or others.

The ACTT program was developed to help those facing tragedy in the community to handle difficulties through prayer and study leading to gradual moral development.

In addition to Etz Ahaim and Ahavas Achim, the synagogues involved are Congregation Ohav Emeth in Highland Park, Congregation Ohr Torah in Edison, Congregation Poile Zedek in New



Rabbi David Bassous of Congregation Etz Ahaim in Highland Park spoke about anger management Nov. 12 during the latest Achieving Change Through Torah program.

Brunswick, and Young Israel of East Brunswick.

Those from outside the community may also participate through on-line discussion groups and material.

To register or for information, contact 732-993-5376 or info@actt613.org or visit www.actt613.org.

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