

## A Chelemer's View of America by Philip Fishl Kutner

It was the year 2010 and Chelm just entered the twentieth century. They had a telephone and a radio. No longer was Chelm a Third World Country. With these two new means of communication they were now attached to the outside world.

Our story begins in the Chelm Shtetl Square. One early morning while Sheyne was on her way to Shmuel the Shnayder. She hears a baby crying. The sound is coming from a box. There inside is a little boy with a note attached. Dos iz mayn kind Zygmund.

Because it was written in Yiddish everyone assumed that the mother or perhaps the father was Jewish. No one knew to whom the baby might belong. So, meanwhile, Sheyne would care for him.

The gossip around the shtetl was that the mother was Jewish and had an affair or was raped by a Cossack. Others were of the opinion that one of the Jewish men had an affair with a gypsy woman. Either way, they would never know.

As Zygmund grew up, it was evident that he was no ordinary child. Everyone called him Zindele or Zundele. He was a handsome child, dark of color with large piercing eyes. He was a head taller than the other boys. His physical prowess was far beyond those for his age. He was the fastest runner in all of Chelm and he could arm-wrestle any boy 3 years older than himself.

It was in kheyder that his talent really shone. It was said that he would grow up and become a famous rabbi. This was a problem for Sheyne and her husband, for they were plain people with little religious training.

The time was soon approaching for Zindele's bar mitsve. Meanwhile word of his physical and intellectual prowess had reached America. A letter arrived offering to pay for a big event with all expenses paid. It was from the Coney Island Jewish Welfare Board. It read as follows:

WHEREAS Zindele is approaching his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday;  
WHEREAS all Jewish boys should have a bar mitsve;

WHEREAS his foster parents are not able to have an event fitting Zindele's bright future, and

WHEREAS Coney Island is the second most holy place in the world next to the Western Wall,

it is hereby suggested that Zindele have the bar mitsve service at the Coney Island Ultra Orthodox Synagogue and that the ensuing party be at The Glatt Kosher Famous French Fries and Frankfurter Emporium.

There was no doubt that such an honor for a Chelemer would be accepted.

### Zindele's Report Upon His Return

All of Chelm crowded into the Chelm Shtetl Square to hear "Zindele's View of America". Here is the text of his speech.

"All that the teenagers in America talk about is *temperature and food*. Everything good is COOL. On the other hand if the boys like a girl they say she is a HOT chick. If they don't like her then she is a COLD fish.

"When someone is not telling the truth they say, He is full of HOT air. There is HOT bed, Hot blooded, HOT box, Hot cakes, Hot corner, Hot cross bun, HOT dog, Hot foot, HOT frame, HOT money, HOT front, Hot pack, HOT pepper, HOT plate, HOT rod, HOT seat, HOT shot, HOT stuff and Hot tempered.

"Of course then there is COLD: COLD blooded, COLD chisel, COLD cream, COLD cuts, COLD fish, COLD front, COLD hearted, COLD pack COLD patch, COLD, snap, COLD shoulder, COLD sore, COLD storage, COLD sweat, COLD war, and COLD wave.

"When it comes to food, the Ameikane really go out of their way to mention FOOD. Money is called lettuce. There is APPLE cart, APPLE polish, APPLE of one's eye. Someone can be a good EGG or a bad EGG. If you do something wrong, you lay an EGG. If you are smart, you are an EGGhead. If you put all of your money in one investment, you put all your EGGS in one basket. If you are walking very cautiously, you are walking on EGGS.

"I am so happy to return home to my fellow Chelemer and not have think only about TEMPERATURE and FOOD."

The next time you visit Coney Island. Stop over at the Coney Island Ultra Orthodox Synagogue and look for the plaque commemorating the event of the bar mitsve of Zindele the Chelemer.