



The World of Lubavitch

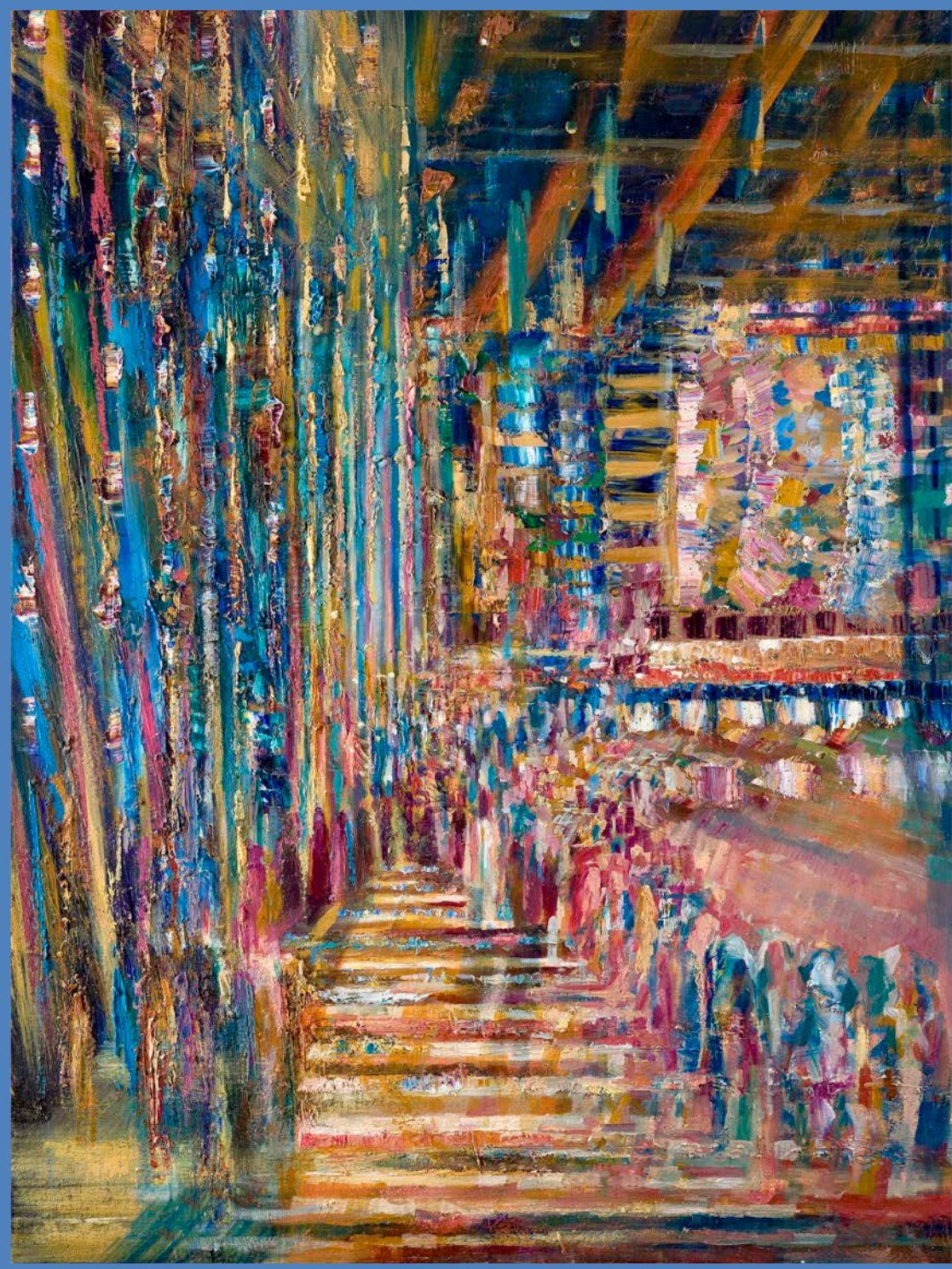
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Chabad Lubavitch Honours Warren Kimel

The 38th annual dinner of Chabad Lubavitch held on Tuesday, November 22, 2016, drew a large crowd from the entire spectrum of the Jewish community. It was truly delightful to witness the prevailing warm atmosphere as hundreds of friends welcomed the opportunity to participate in the tribute to Warren Kimel. "The honoree has taken a leadership role in many community initiatives and most certainly deserves to be recognized for his generosity of time and resources," said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum,

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My Plastic Pharaoh

By Tzvi Freeman

So here I am, scrubbing out the crumbs from my ergonomic keyboard, faxing in my Deed of Chametz Sale and downloading a new Haggadah. In other words, it's almost Passover already. I'll soon be sitting at the Seder table with family and friends and the same question as with every one of these holidays is going to come up: What are we celebrating? What are we all here for?

My kids tell me that's no question: We're here to celebrate our freedom. That's what the holiday is called, "The Festival of Our Freedom." We were slaves in Egypt, now we are free. So let's get to the meal and celebrate.

I'm glad they feel so free. As for me, I'm still a slave and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, never died. I labor for him all week long. He tricked me into it: First, he let me have all these nice things I really wanted for nothing. Later he started demanding money for them. When, one time, I didn't pay all the money, he demanded even more money. So I have to keep working real hard to give him all the money he demands.

I carry a picture of Pharaoh in his present incarnation in my wallet. It has his very intimidating new name engraved on it. He's called "Master Card."

But my kids don't go for that. They say that in the Haggadah it says Pharaoh let us go free. Well, I know the Haggadah a little better than them. The fact is, the Haggadah, like every other piece of Torah, is full of puzzles and seeming contradictions, there just so you'll ask questions. If you read any piece of Torah, especially the Haggadah, and you don't have any questions, you obviously aren't reading right.

(That's why the "Son Who Doesn't Know How to Ask Questions" gets put at the very end of the table. Not the Wicked Son. Not the Simple Son. The "Unquestioning Son." Not just because unquestioning is very unJewish, but also because it means you're plain not paying attention to what's going on.)

To get to the point: We just finished making Kiddush, in which we call this "The Festival of Our Freedom." What do we say next? "This is the Poor Man's Bread...Now we are slaves, next year we will be free men."

Now is that a contradiction or is that a contradiction? Are we free or are we slaves?

So my kids tell me that we're celebrating that once we were slaves and then we got free and so we're celebrating. The fact that we all got into a mess and became slaves again, well, too bad. We can still commemorate the past. As long as the dinner is good.

Let me tell you something: I'm not into commemorating the past. If I'm going through all this trouble in the year 5760, 3,312 years later to clean my house for Passover and make a big Seder, it's got to have more significance than commemorating something that cancelled itself out with history anyway.

The problem of being a slave with all these contradictions, coupled with the stress of cleaning for Passover, really bothered me. So I went to see a psychotherapist. The psychotherapist listened, took notes and then told me that MasterCard is not Pharaoh. I am Pharaoh. More specifically, my unreasonable demands upon myself is the Pharaoh.

I told him my only real demand upon myself is that I should not be a slave. He said I shouldn't use that word, "should." The word "should" means I'm making an unreasonable demand upon myself. That causes stress. Stress, in his Haggadah, is slavery. Apparently, the Hebrews in Egypt were really stressed out. Building pyramids was nothing. It's the stress that did them in.

"So," I asked, "What should I do? I don't want to be a slave." He told me I shouldn't do anything. Wanting is ok. I can want to not be a slave. Shoulding is bad. It's unreasonable to should.

Now I was really confused. I had always understood that "I should" was my liberator and "I want" was the one that got me in all this trouble to begin with. But the hour was up and there I was in the office showing my picture of Pharaoh to the psychotherapist's secretary.

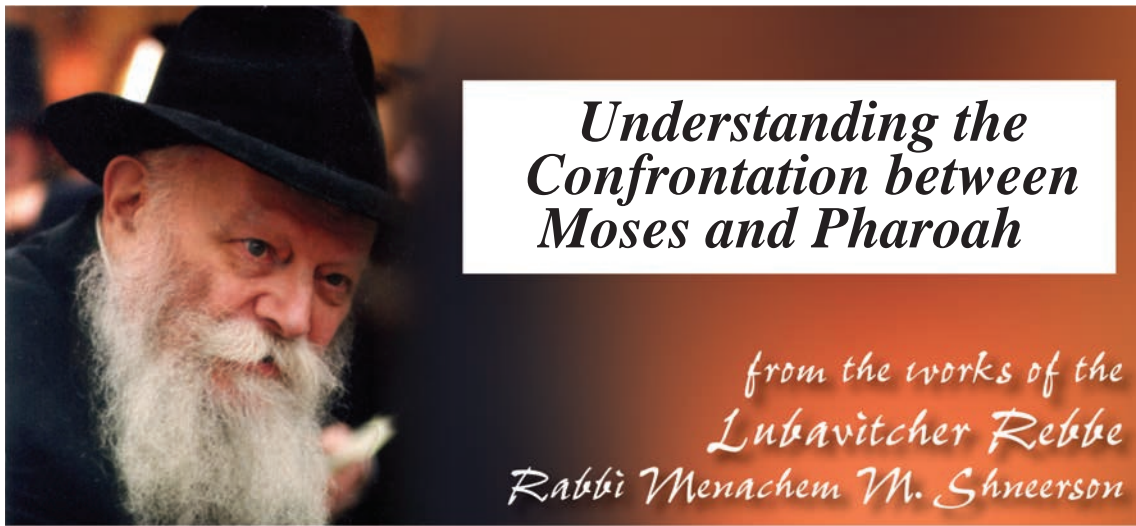
"In summary," I thought, "I shouldn't say should." I needed to make another appointment with the shrink to ask whether I should or should not say that I shouldn't say should. But, at these professional rates, I didn't think my little Pharaoh would let me.

At any rate, I decided, I don't need a shrink to achieve liberation. After all, liberation is a form of enlightenment. When is the last time you met a spiritually enlightened psychotherapist? What I needed was a guru. An elevated, transcendent soul who is essentially liberated and could pull me out of all this muck and mire.

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Defeating the Soul of Evil

Adapted by Yanki Tauber.
 And G-d said to Moses:
 “Come to Pharaoh; for I have
 hardened his heart and the
 hearts of his servants, in order
 that I might show My signs in
 their midst . . .” (Exodus 10:1)
 Why does it say, “Come
 to Pharaoh”? It should have
 said, “Go to Pharaoh” . . .
 But G-d brought Moses into a
 chamber within a chamber, to
 the . . . supernal and mighty
 serpent from which many
 levels evolve . . . which Mo-
 ses feared to approach him-
 self . . . (Zohar 2:34a)



Understanding the Confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh

from the works of the
 Lubavitcher Rebbe
 Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

A list of pivotal events in Jewish history would certainly include the exodus of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. The Exodus marked our birth as a people, and we are enjoined to “remember the day that you went out of Egypt, all the days of your life.” Indeed, when G-d revealed Himself to us at Sinai, He introduced Himself not as the Creator of heaven and earth, but as “your G-d, who has taken you out of the land of Egypt”! For the defining element of our relationship with G-d is not that we are beings created by Him (of which there are many others in G-d’s world), but that we are free beings—beings in whom He has invested of His own infinity and eternity, beings empowered by Him to transcend the constraints of the material world and the limits of their own natures.

The Name

Bo means “come.” The name of the third section of the book of Exodus derives from the Parshah’s opening verse, in which G-d instructs Moses to “come to Pharaoh” to warn him of the eighth plague (the plague of locusts) and to once again deliver the divine demand that the ruler of Egypt set free the children of Israel.

The Torah considers the name of a thing to be the articulation of its essence; certainly, such is the case with the Torah’s own names for itself and its components. The name of a Torah section always conveys its primary message and the common theme of all its subsections and narratives.

One would therefore expect the section of the Exodus to be called “Exodus,” “Freedom,” or some other name that expresses the significance of this defining event in the history of Israel. Instead, it derives its name from Moses’ coming to Pharaoh—an event

that seems but a preliminary to the Exodus. Indeed, the concept of the leader of Israel coming to Pharaoh’s palace to petition him to let the Jewish people go—implying that the Jews are still subservient to Egypt and its ruler—seems the very antithesis of the Exodus!

The phrase “Come to Pharaoh” also evokes much discussion in the commentaries. Why does G-d tell Moses to come to Pharaoh? Would it not have been more appropriate to say, “Go to Pharaoh”?

The Zohar explains that Moses feared confronting

Pharaoh inside his palace, at the hub of his power. (On earlier occasions, Moses had been directed to meet Pharaoh in other places, such as on the king’s morning excursions to the Nile.) So, G-d promised Moses that He Himself would accompany him to Pharaoh. The word “come” is thus to be understood in the sense of “come with me”; G-d is saying to Moses, “Come with Me to Pharaoh.”

The Zohar goes on to say that Moses is being invited by G-d to meet with the innermost essence of Egypt’s ruler and god. Thus we have

another meaning of the phrase “Come to Pharaoh—“come” in the sense of “enter within.” To liberate the people of Israel from the “great and mighty serpent,” it was not enough to merely go to Pharaoh; Moses had to enter into the core of Pharaoh, into the very root of his power.

My River

Who is Pharaoh, and what does he represent? What is his “innermost essence”? Why did Moses dread confronting Pharaoh in his palace, if G-d Himself had sent him there? And how does “coming into

Pharaoh” hold the key to the Exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the soul of man?

The prophet Ezekiel describes Pharaoh as “the great serpent who couches in the midst of his streams, who says: My river is my own, and I have made myself” (Ezekiel 29:3). In other words, the evil of Pharaoh is not defined by the promiscuity that characterized the pagan cults of Egypt; not by his enslavement and torture of millions; not by his bathing in the blood of slaughtered children—but by his egocentrism, by his regarding his own self as the source and standard for everything.

For this is the root of all evil. Self-centeredness might seem a benign sin compared to the acts of cruelty and depravity to which man can sink, but it is the source and essence of them all. When a person considers the self and its needs to be the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong, his morality—and he might initially be a very moral person—is a sham. Such a per-

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Remembering the Future

By Yanki Tauber

“In every generation,” say our sages, “a person is obligated to see himself as if he himself has come out of Egypt.”

Mitzrayim, the Hebrew word for “Egypt,” means “boundaries” and “constrictions”; yetziat mitzrayim, “going out of Egypt,” is the endeavor to rise above all that inhibits the soul of man, be it limitations imposed by an outside force, or the physical, psychological or spiritual limitations imposed by habit and nature.

One of the most constricting elements of the human condition is the phenomenon of time. Time carries off the past and holds off the future, confining our lives to a temporal sliver of “present.” But on

the first night of Passover we break the bonds of time, having received a mandate to experience the Exodus “as if he himself has come out of Egypt.” We recall the Exodus in our minds, verbalize it in the telling of the Haggadah, digest it in the form of matzah and wine. As we passover the centuries, memory -- those faded visages of past that generally constitute our only answer to the tyranny of time -- becomes experience, and history is made current and real.

Passover is an eight-day festival, with two opening and two closing days of heightened observance and commemoration (Yom Tov). While the theme of redemption runs as a current through the entire festival, the first days of Passover focus primarily on our first redemption -- our liberation from Egypt thirty-three centuries ago--while the closing days highlight the final redemption -- the future era of divine goodness and perfection heralded by Moshiach.

On the first two nights of Passover we conduct the Seder, reliving our redemption from Egypt in the telling of the Haggadah, the eating of the matzah and the bitter herbs, and the drinking of the four cups of wine. On the seventh day of Passover, we read the “Song

at the Sea,” which contains an important allusion to the Messianic era; on the eighth day, the haftarah (reading from the Prophets) is from Isaiah 10:32-12:6--one of the primary prophecies on the future Redemption. Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, instituted the custom of partaking of “Moshiach’s Feast”--a mirror seder of sorts that includes matzah and four cups of wine--on the afternoon of the eighth day of Passover.

Thus on the latter days of Passover, our transcendence of time enters a new, heightened phase: it is one thing to vitalize memory to the point of actual re-experience, but quite another to make real an event that lies in the future, especially an event that has no parallel in the history of man. Yet in the closing hours of Passover, we enter into the world of Moshiach. Having vaulted over millennia of past on the seder nights, we now surmount the blank wall of future, to taste the matzah and wine of the ultimate redemption.



ON OUR COVER

Shir HaMaalot
 by Artist:
 Yoram Raanan

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ב"ה

**SUNDAY
MAY 14**

**LAG
BAOMER**

THE GREAT JEWISH FAMILY FESTIVAL

**FEATURING
THE TWINS
FROM
FRANCE**

CELEBRATING UNITY

**FREE
ADMISSION**

EARL BALES PARK

(Sheppard & Bathurst)

12:00 noon



**TWINS FROM
FRANCE**

1:00 - 2:00 pm



UNITY PARADE

Marching Band! Clowns! Floats!
Live Music!

2:00 - 6:00 pm



FAIR & RIDES

Kosher Food! New, more rides!
Carnival Booths!

Weather permitting



**HOT AIR
BALLOON RIDE**

Limited tickets available.
Tickets will be sold starting 11:30 am

5:00 pm



BONFIRE

P FREE PARKING
at 55 Yeomans Dr.
Courtesy of Congregation Beth David

Free Bow
and Arrow set
for each child
participating in
the Parade



www.LagBaomer.ca



A Project of Chabad Lubavitch Institutions, Jewish Russian Community Centre and Tzivos Hashem Canada

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Twins From France to Perform at Lag B'omer Great Jewish Family Festival

The popular Twins From France, brothers Yisroel and Moshe Gurion, will once again perform at this year's Lag B'omer Family Festival. The city wide celebration will be held at Earl Bales Park on Sunday May 14th 2017. Their performance will take place at the noon hour rally in the Zukerman Amphitheatre.

The superb act of these versatile acrobats is truly amazing. They continue to innovate and have perfected

during the Talmudic era some two thousand years ago, this exuberant celebration takes place in the great outdoors, be it a park, field or stadium. Needless to say the radical departure from the norm leaves an indelible impression and lingering memories that remain for a lifetime. So too, it reflects the unique character of this special day.

Shortly after assuming leadership, the Lubavitcher



their show to keep the audience spellbound and coming back time and again. They can be identified by any 5 year old by their trademark plaid hats with long payos at the sides. As a result of their numerous videos and card games, they are forever being watched on iPads all over the world allowing mothers to prepare for Shabbat etc. They are self-taught and very talented and on the cutting edge so always remind your children, "Don't try this at home!" Chabad Lubavitch, together with our partner sponsors: Tzivos Hashem Canada and JRCC, are truly delighted that we were able to book them for this auspicious day.

Generally Jewish holidays and rituals are observed at home and at Shul. One exception to the rule would be Lag B'omer. Ever since its inception

Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson obm instituted a children's parade in support of traditional Jewish values, especially Jewish education. Since its inception almost 60 years ago, whenever Lag B'omer occurs on Sunday, city wide parades are held throughout Israel, and in Jewish communities all over the world.

This year, Lag B'omer once again falls on a Sunday, May 14, 2017. A full day of festivities is planned in the city centre, at Earl Bales Park, starting at 12 noon and culminating with the customary evening bonfire and music. The celebration begins with a noon hour rally and the acrobatic show by the Twins from France. In keeping with tradition the children, proudly displaying banners, will march along Bathurst Street in sync with marching bands and accompanied



by floats depicting various Mitzvot and Jewish themes.

During the afternoon the participants will enjoy a host of rides and try their skill at carnival booths. The Remax hot air balloon will be on hand to offer children vertical rides. Food booths will offer conventional fair and carnival treats. During the afternoon a DJ will spin lively Jewish music. Admission is free. So too, in keeping with tradition young boys who have just reached the age of three will be feted and have the opportunity to celebrate this milestone - their first haircut - with the masses.

In past years, this event attracted some five thousand people, young and old, who participated in a most meaningful and enjoyable day. Much effort and expense is being invested in this grand celebration. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to bring their friends and neighbours.

Lag B'omer is Hebrew for the 33rd day of the Omer counting. This is a reference to the biblical mandate to count seven complete weeks from the second day of Pesach, culminating with the festival of Shavuot which occurs on the 50th day. The Talmud notes that during the Omer period a plague of enormous proportion erupted in which 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva perished because they did not show proper respect to each other. Hence numerous restrictions associated with mourning are observed. On Lag B'omer, this plague ended and conversely it is a day of celebration.

The day of Lag B'omer is also celebrated as the Yartzeit of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, one of the most noteworthy Talmudic sages who authored the Zohar, the primary treatise of Kabbalah. But whereas a Yartzeit is usually a somber day, Rabbi Shimon left explicit instruction that his day of passing be celebrated in a most joyous manner. In Meron, Israel, the burial place of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rabbi Elazar, hundreds of thousands of Jews gather each year to celebrate with bonfires, torches, song and feasting.

As restrictions of mourning are lifted on this 33rd day of the Omer, weddings, parties, listening to music, and haircuts are commonly scheduled.

Chabad Lubavitch Honours Warren Kimel

Continued from page 1

Regional Director of Chabad Lubavitch.

The evening program began with a prayer for our brethren in Israel led by Rabbi Moshe Spalter, administrator of Chabad Lubavitch and followed by opening remarks by dinner chairman Ronnie Appleby. In his opening remarks he noted how gratifying it was to see guests and representation from all the

making Judaism meaningful and relevant to the masses and equally for the individual. With his unique talent, exuberance, and knowledge he kept the audience spellbound as he successfully presented a timely message with brilliance and cutting edge humor.

His message highlighted this year's campaign slogan "What's the Point", underscoring the indestructible soul imbedded within each person.



Mr. Ronnie Appleby chairs the dinner

major institutions that form the infrastructure of our wonderful city.

The festive spirit was augmented by a dazzling performance by the thirteen year old Biana Pinchuk, who has been honing her proficiency since the tender age of five. The Floridian musical prodigy enthralled the august assembly with a compilation of musical compositions on the violin. It was truly a delight to listen to and witness her concentration and agility as she blended both traditional and original scores so skillfully.

In a most humorous manner an eight minute video clip showcased some of the endeavors of Chabad Lubavitch. The hilarious footage has the honoree, Warren decked out in a Chassidic frock and a wide brim fedora taking up a challenge from Rabbi Grossbaum to reach out to the unaffiliated. Whether it's manning a shift at a Tefilin station or offering shoppers to say a bracha with the Lulov and Esrog somehow his attempts are unproductive while others succeed so effortlessly. In the final scene, Rabbi Grossbaum and Warren agree to each stay loyal and devoted to what they do best: The rabbi will do outreach and the businessman will support these endeavors. The video continues with some adorable remarks from Warren's grandchildren, Elle, Sophia, and Teddy.

The guest speaker, Rabbi Yoseph Y. Jacobson, enthralled the assembly with his wit and wisdom. Drawing a verbal tapestry he enlightened and underscored the contribution of Chabad Lubavitch in

"Der pintele Yid," may sometimes lay dormant or even buried beneath a façade of indifference, still, the sleeping giant is prone to be awoken by fanning its dormant embers with a dosage of Torah study or by the performance of Mitzvot.

Extolling the virtues of their humble dad, the honoree, Lauren Weiss and Jeffery Kimel spoke with much pride how he does so much for the community, with no fanfare. They noted with much admiration the time and resources he gives so generously for Jewish education, our seniors, and the Jewish Federation. He taught us that "there are no shortcuts, it's all about hard work, and action speaks louder than words."

With much delight Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum presented Mr. Warren Kimel with a large artistic silver Menorah in recognition of his unstinting and indiscriminate generosity towards the entire spectrum of Jewish life which advance Jewish education, healthcare, our youth, and Israel.

In his acceptance message Warren, with characteristic humility, admitted that the inspiration for community service comes from his wife Debbie, who takes a leading role in countless causes. So too he acknowledged his knowledgeable and dedicated staff which allows him the luxury to devote time and resources for community causes. All this is possible after an early morning power boost that includes Tefillin and a fitness regime.

Chabad Extends Northward to Newmarket

True to our mandate to reach out to Jews where ever they may be, Chabad Lubavitch of Ontario is opening yet another satellite centre in the neighbouring city of Newmarket. Anyone travelling up to cottage country on Highway 404 surely took note of

Newmarket is Rabbi Mendy and Libby Grossbaum. Mendy is the son of Rabbi Zalman and Esther Grossbaum, who serve at the helm of Chabad Lubavitch of Southern Ontario for over four decades. His wife Libby is the daughter of Rabbi Yisroel and Leah Spalter,

estimated at some 300 families, the sparse presence has a silver lining, in that everyone eagerly welcomes the opportunity to express their Jewishness and participate in Torah classes and holiday programs," said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum.

Arriving just a few weeks before Purim the inaugural event was a Purim family celebration. Some 35 families with children gathered at the Doug Duncan Community Centre to hear the Megilla, and celebrate Purim. The children designed masks and decorated cookies with an assortment of sweets. All children in costumes received prizes. Still the overriding atmospheric joy was the arrival of Chabad to the up and coming municipality where numerous housing subdivisions are under construction.

Currently they are promoting and assisting people with the upcoming festival of Pesach. Still, initially they will be doing their utmost to build a comprehensive data base as they continue to learn of new families that reside in Newmarket and East Gwillimbury. Rabbi Mendy and Libby are available for teaching and counseling anyone interested in studying about their heritage, as well as to answer questions pertaining to Judaism.

Mendy can be reached at 647-770-2539 or via email at Rabbi@JewishNewmarket.com

For more information on upcoming events and classes visit the site www.JewishNewmarket.com



the numerous housing developments sprouting further and further north blanketing the horizon with houses where just a few years ago it was all corn fields.

The city of Newmarket boasts a growing population that will soon number 100,000. The York Region headquarters is centrally located in the township. So too, it includes the Upper Canada Mall which is currently undertaking a 60 million dollar renovation.

No doubt the worldwide expansion of Chabad Lubavitch branches can be attributed to the living legacy of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe of blessed memory. His inspiration continues to motivate young and energetic couples to join his forever growing brigade of Shluchim. During the course of some four decades the Rebbe extolled the importance and obligation of promulgating Torah values amongst all Jews wherever they may be. Furthermore, he noted, that engaging in the dissemination of Yiddishkeit will be a most rewarding experience for those that respond to his clarion call, notwithstanding the hardships that may be associated with reaching out to the unaffiliated. Indeed, today the universal network of Chabad Lubavitch centres around the world amply bears witness of the Rebbe's vision and conviction.

The young couple awarded the opportunity to engage as Shluchim to

the designated Shluchim of Weston, Florida. Having both been educated in the Chabad school system and raised from infancy in an environment permeated with the spirit of outreach, they are cognizant of the challenge which lies ahead, yet they are equally energized with the satisfaction that comes along with creating an environment where Judaism will grow and flourish.

"Although Newmarket has small Jewish presence,

Local Shluchim Gather for Inspiration

The phenomena of Shlichut, the generic Hebrew word that summarizes the presence of a Chabad representative in Kinshasa, Congo Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam and 3 thousand less exotic locations, is attributed to the incredible vision of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, of blessed memory. Ever since the Rebbe assumed the mantle of leadership in 1951, he encouraged his Chassidim to reach out to the unaffiliated all over the world. In due time the Hebrew word Shlichut would become the generic term that encapsulated the vocation of thousands of young rabbis and their families that responded to the clarion call of the Rebbe.

Although the initial foray into the global landscape of post WW2 was fraught with many challenges and hardships, the Rebbe always took a special interest in the well-being of his growing brigade of Shluchim. Their struggle was his struggle and their success was his success. The Rebbe took a keen interest in both, their physical and spiritual well being. On countless occasions the Rebbe spoke fervently about the vital role and great merit of the Shluchim to be charged with the task of fanning the dormant embers of the soul, embedded in the unaffiliated Jew and waiting to be kindled.

So too, he initiated numerous endeavour to organize and unify the Shluchim as an entity unto themselves notwithstanding the geographic distance between them or the diverse designation assigned to them as rabbis, educators, administrators. The common goal was enough to bridge Bangkok and Boston and the Cheder teacher to the campus rabbi. Thus in 1983 the Rebbe suggested an annual conference of

Shluchim. A weekend conclave dedicated to share ideas and explore new initiatives. During the Shabbat Farbrengen, the Rebbe would charge the Shluchim with an inspirational message and new directives.

Year after year, the august assembly grew from hundreds of delegates to thousands, and while the enormous event was conducive for global issues and inspiration, it was no longer an intimate setting for open discussions and problem solving. Hence the Rebbe suggested that in addition to the international annual assembly, there should also be periodic geographically regional conferences in all countries and districts.

Today, the GTA is blessed with over 80 Shluchim, who head our satellite centres, schools, summer camps, and Chabad Houses. With diverse responsibilities and conflicting schedules, getting together is certainly of merit but difficult to schedule. However when Rabbi Yossi Shusterman of Los Angeles, a veteran Shliach and a recognized halachic decisor was invited to spend a weekend in Toronto to address the parents of Cheder Chabad, Rabbi Yossi Gansburg seized the opportunity to organize a regional conclave for the GTA Shluchim. The conference, which was also addressed by Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, who was personally charged by the Rebbe, to spearhead this universal initiative, covered such topics as how to reach as many Jews from diverse backgrounds and still maintain strong Halachic standards. The Shluchim spent the evening together, sharing words of inspiration over dinner. A special program and luncheon was also organized for the Shluchot and women who serve as educators.



Joseph Kerzner Camp Scholarship Fund

From the inception of the Lubavitch Day Camp, some forty years ago, special consideration was given to deserving families who were offered a discount in accordance to their needs. This initiative was taken in accordance to the wish of Rabbi Schneerson obm, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who fervently encouraged all Chabad centres to establish camps so that no child would waste his time aimlessly over the two months of summer. Furthermore he noted, "Vacation may be a break from general studies but it is not a break from religious study or practice."

Heeding the clarion call of the Rebbe, the Lubavitch Day Camp grew from year to year and with a stellar

To ameliorate and address this concern we have established an endowment fund. The fund is dedicated in memory and in tribute to Mr. Joseph Kerzner alav ha-Shalom. Indeed, his bequest is the primary and initial source of revenue. Still, in order to preserve the principle and grow the fund we have elected to dedicate the income of our Greeting Card project to enhance the existing endowment. Whether it's a birth, Simcha, Yartzeit, or to convey condolences, these attractive cards are a meaningful and practical way to express your sentiments. Through a year round "All occasion" greeting card program, we hope to grow the fund so that the "fruit" it yields provides the resources



Mr. Joseph Kerzner A"H

reputation it now provides a meaningful summer to over 600 children. Yet, this has not slowed us down and six years ago Chabad Lubavitch launched Camp Gan Israel. Situated in picturesque Haliburton region, the overnight camp is a sprawling 207 acre oasis along the shores of Basshaunt Lake. The month long program (girls in July, boys, in August) in the great outdoors, is a perfect setting for youngsters to invigorate the body and nurture the soul.

All in all, well over 1200 youngsters enjoy the summer by attending either the Lubavitch Day Camp or Gan Israel in Haliburton. Notwithstanding the financial burden, we feel we get excellent value by providing a meaningful summer for over a thousand children and teenagers, either as campers or counselors!

A considerable portion of campers attend on a scholarship. Notwithstanding some funding from the Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund and the Federal Government, over the years, the skyrocketing costs have severely impacted our fiscal stability.

needed to successfully address the growing needs in our scholarship fund.

Indeed, the deed of Tzedaka is the most tangible way to show you care and is considered the "gift of life." This notion is elucidated by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad Chassidic Movement. He explains the centrality of Tzedaka in Jewish life and why it is recognized as the most inclusive observance. He notes; "when one gives charity they are giving the gift of life, since the said allocation is the result of his/her hard earned efforts to earn a livelihood. Furthermore, even when the effort is minimal and the gift is from a surplus, still one could have elected to indulge; hence the charity extended to others is considered the "gift of life."

So the next time you wish to express your good wishes of Mazel Tov, why not convey your sentiments with a greeting card from the Joseph Kerzner Camp Scholarship Fund and give the "gift of life." Greeting cards may be ordered by contacting the Chabad Lubavitch office or at www.chabad.ca

Children from all walks of Jewish life touch, feel and learn about Passover traditions at the Chabad-Lubavitch model matzah bakery. For some parents it's déjà vu having attended the model bakery some thirty years ago while attending one of the numerous schools that feature the pre Pesach visit every year. The rabbinical students who direct the bakery do a fabulous job, while gaining some "real time" experience.

Sara Hecht, director of the Chabad Talmud Torah in Aurora concurs. "Rabbi Asher and Rabbi Mair are so animated, and you can tell that they really love kids." The program is interactive and engaging. The model matzah bakery is an important part of getting into the Pesach mode so schools make the extra effort to book a date and arrange transportation.

During the recent hour-long presentation, Jason Federman and approximately 80 other toddlers laughed and cheered as they baked matzah, the thin cracker-like food eaten on Pesach to commemorate how the Jews left Egypt in such a hurry that they didn't have time to allow the dough to rise.

Rabbi Yossi Gansburg, educational director of Chabad Lubavitch noted that almost every Jewish school and Talmud Torah will visit the model matzah bakery in the weeks before Pesach. We hope that the results are noticeable on the night of Pesach with the active participation of youngsters at the family seder.

The rabbinical students oversee a number of stations.

There is the wheat-grinding room, where a "farmer" has the children remove the kernels from the wheat stalk and operate a hand mill, crushing the wheat into flour. That is also where the rabbis tell the Exodus story in a manner that has the children giggling in their seats. The next stop is the bakery, which is divided into two sections. In one area, kids get to stand in a specially built structure to mix flour and water, and then knead

or even own on Passover. We show the kids how the equipment must be dry before we begin mixing, and that we keep the flour and water in separate structures until the moment they mix, just like in matzah bakeries.

The Thornhill model matzah bakery is part of a chain of hundreds of similar ones around the world. More than 3,000 children come annually to the Chabad Lubavitch Community Centre to make



the dough. In another area, they line up at tables and roll out their dough, then watch as their matzah gets placed into a brick oven on a wooden pole.

"We try as hard as we can to ensure that our model matzah bakery is a true representation of the real thing," explains Rabbi Mair, whose father is the Chabad rabbi of the Vancouver Chabad community. "The key to baking matzah is that the water and flour must not be in contact for more than 18 minutes before they are placed in the oven, because any more than that and the mixture will become chametz (leaven), which we may not consume

matzah in a fully outfitted model bakery that includes an authentic oven. According to Rabbi Moshe Spalter, "We have children who come to our programs from literally every sector. There have been Boy Scout troops and special needs children. They came from Reform schools, Conservative schools and fervently Orthodox schools, public schools, and even groups from other cities. And then there are the adults. We have senior groups who have participated and had a blast. Passover is a tradition treasured by all Jews. We all eat matzah, and we can all learn".



Newfoundland, The Next Frontier to Draw Chabad to its Shores

By [Shmuel Loebenstein](#)

I could hear the screech of packing tape being stretched across cardboard boxes and the thud, thud of its ends being slapped down by eager hands. Speaking by phone to Rabbi Chanan Chernitsky at his apartment in Montreal, a mountain of cargo seemed to grow in the background. He and his wife, Tuba, were preparing to send it all to their new

Newfoundland.

It is here, on this island in the Atlantic Ocean that only joined Canada in 1949, that the romantic writer may truly offer his tributes to the wide expanses untouched by man and the thrill of being on the edge of civilization.

But what the 27-year-old rabbi and his 26-year-old wife see in Newfoundland and its Jewish population is what truly drove the fron-

The earliest recorded Jewish presence in the province is from 1770, when English Jews started making their way across the pond. Simon Solomon—possessed of a name so Jewish-British that it is obvious he was among their numbers—was the first postmaster of Newfoundland, arriving there in 1792. The Jewish community grew in dribs and drabs, numbering about 100 families in the 1950s. Today, perhaps 500 Jews reside in Newfoundland.

On that trip a year ago, the native Canadian couple (both from Winnipeg) threw a Tu B'Shevat party and set to work meeting the locals. They came back again from Purim to Passover, when they held seders in conjunction with the community leadership. During that month-long stay, the Chernitskys distributed handmade shmurah matzah, conducted a children's program, chatted with residents and began to feel that this place might just become their home.

"We enjoyed our visits, but still weren't sure what we'd do," relates the rabbi. "We returned to Montreal and within a couple of weeks made our decision: We would move to Newfoundland."

Theirs was not the only Chabad foray there; rabbinical students sent by Lubavitch headquarters in New York had for years come periodically to the province, slowly cultivating contacts and relationships on which the Chernitskys



Cabot Tower on Signal Hill in St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador.



Rabbi Chanan & Tuba Cherintzky with their older two children.

home and the home of Canada's newest Chabad House: St. John's, Newfoundland. Their dishes, books, strollers, menorah, Shabbat candlesticks, and other home and Jewish necessities would soon begin a 1,500-mile journey to a remote Canadian island—and so would the Chernitskys and their three young children.

Writers tasked with reporting on the Chabad shlichus juggernaut have shown a weakness for frontier language, eager to write of uncharted territory and the intrepid young couples who bring the wisdom and practice of Torah to Jewish locals and travelers in remote areas. If there ever was a place deserving of the frontier label, it is

tiersmen of old: the untapped potential and untold promise. There has not been an Orthodox Jewish presence in Newfoundland for decades, and to the Chernitskys, it is fertile land to till (agriculture metaphors—growth, fruits, seeds—are the next best option after frontier ones).

The uniqueness of Newfoundland's Jewish community is a reflection of the province, which also includes mainland Labrador to the northwest, as a whole. Prior to joining Canada, Newfoundland was an English colony for centuries; the native-born tend to have English, Irish or Scottish ancestry. Its time zone is half-an-hour off from any other time zone in North America. It stands apart geographically from much of Canada—a rugged territory of roughly 150 square miles with a little more than 500,000 people just 1,300 miles from Greenland. Triangular in shape, the rocky island blocks the mouth of the Saint Lawrence River, creating the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, the world's largest estuary.

The Chernitskys first visited St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland, in February 2016. The first Jews to ever visit came a bit before that:

could now draw. Torontonian businessman David Levine, who has been traveling to Newfoundland on business, helped serve local Jewish needs by, among other things, organising holiday event, helped build a foundation for a permanent presence.

The rabbi is under no disillusionment about what Jewish living in Newfoundland will be like. There is no Jewish day school, no kosher dairy, and they are a three-hour plane ride from Montreal and its Jewish hub. But he is not deterred. He has all but convinced the local supermarket to stock kosher chicken, has found kosher bagels in the local Costco and has already discovered a circle of Jewish students at the nearby Memorial University of Newfoundland.

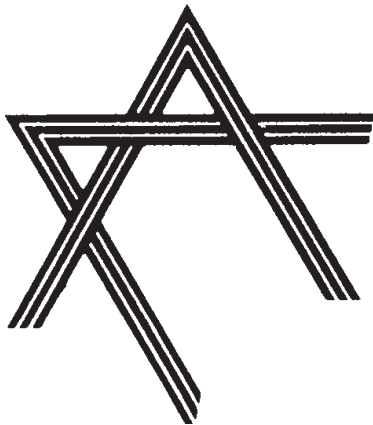
As for all the other parts of Jewish life—well, that's why the Chernitskys are there.

"We have plans. We'll start slowly and carefully, but there's a lot of things we

want to do," says the rabbi before rattling off a list of initiatives he had in the pipeline.

They aim to start a Sunday-morning tefillin and breakfast club, offer a range of Torah classes and establish a full Jewish presence at the university, in addition to holding Jewish holiday programs and celebrations. Their very first event, on March 5, came just three weeks after their arrival. Their oldest child and son, Menachem Mendel, had his upsherin (his first haircut at the age of 3) in his new home—the first such event on the island in about 40 years. A Purim party was held a week later.

Chernitsky describes the harsh winds that rage in from the Atlantic and whip through St. John's, the foggiest city in Canada—some reports say in the world. Newfoundland may indeed be a cold place, but the Chernitskys are determined to stoke its Jewish flame (fire metaphors are a favorite, too).



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1 Million Pounds of Shmurah Matzah: How Passover Production Continues to Rise

A Rarity in the 1950's has Become a National Food Trend

By Dovid Margolin

Passover is around the corner, and handmade shmurah matzah is starting to pop up on supermarket shelves. Before long, it'll be everywhere—from Costco to the White House. Demand for the traditional, round matzah

made available around the country went beyond words. In one notable example, he arranged that the Chabad-Lubavitch movement's central educational organization, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, pay for Korf's shmurah matzah advertisements in

been a wholesaler of shmurah matzah since 1976, and is the man largely responsible for getting handmade matzah into the supermarket aisle. Demand had picked up by the time he got into the business, yet the price of American shmurah matzah was still too high for supermarkets.

Starting with the Pathmark chain in the New York area, Frimerman began stocking shelves in the New York area with lower-priced shmurah matzah imported from Israel, an effort that grew as he penetrated more markets further away from the tri-state area. Some markets expanded their offerings faster than others—something Frimerman unhesitatingly chalks up to the attention of Chabad emissaries.

"The entire shmurah matzah market was able to develop first and foremost due to the shlichim," attests Frimerman. "There was a time when they were the only ones distributing it, often for

free and at a loss. They developed the demand."

While adults received shmurah matzah from their local Chabad rabbis, their children were often learning about it through one of Chabad's most popular yearly programs: the "Model Matzah Bakery" workshops. In the last few decades, hundreds of thousands of children have gotten the chance to make their own handmade matzah through this program conducted by Chabad at Chabad centers, Jewish community centers and other places around the world; in Toronto alone, some 3,000 children experience the program annually. While the matzah they make is for educational purposes and not kosher for Passover, the children learn an appreciation for what goes into making a handmade matzah.

Through seeing Chabad-supplied shmurah matzah at their family seders—soon after making their own from scratch—a generation of

Jewish children has grown up with shmurah matzah, causing the demand to grow exponentially.

When President Barack Obama hosted the White House's first-ever seder in 2009, the round, handmade matzah was supplied by a young aide from Springfield, Mass., named Eric Lesser. Eric's father, Dr. Martin Lesser, had been receiving the round matzah from Chabad of Springfield's Rabbi Dovid Edelman for decades, and when it came time to making the White House seder, it was only natural for Eric to bring the real stuff.

As the production and consumption of shmurah matzah continues to grow each year, Gurock, a keen observer of American Jewish life, synthesizes the product's dramatic half-century of growth: "The Rebbe's dictum ends up at the White House. That's amazing!"



To meet a growing demand, matzah bakeries begin baking shmurah matzah as early as October, producing batches of the tasty discs for consumption the world over. (Photo: Eliyahu Parypa)

has grown at a rapid rate in the last 60 years, and in 2017, according to a survey conducted by Chabad.org, more than 1 million pounds of the handmade variety will be produced in the United States alone. To meet the growing demand, matzah bakeries around the world begin baking shmurah matzah as early as October, producing batches of the tasty, smoking discs.

It wasn't always like that. Tzal Rotter, 81, who grew up in Brooklyn's Brownsville neighborhood, recalls being among only a handful of Jewish children eating shmurah matzah. On the eve of Passover, Rotter's father would close up his kosher butcher shop and the two of them would make the long trip to Manhattan's Lower East Side to purchase the special matzah.

"I remember it being the only matzah bakery around," says Rotter. "It was in a tiny house with a storefront, and the bakery was downstairs in the basement."

In 1954, the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—began talking about the importance of eating authentic shmurah matzah, encouraging his followers to distribute it to every Jew they met and to teach them about its significance. It was around that same time that he encouraged a recent Russian immigrant, Rabbi Yehoshua Korf, to open what became the Lubavitcher Matzah Bakery at 109 Broome St. on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

The Rebbe's insistence that shmurah matzah be

Chicago through the Chabad emissary there.

On the other side of the country, Chabad's first representative in Los Angeles, Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik, heeded the Rebbe's call and became the sole distributor of handmade shmurah matzah on the West Coast. Despite the lack of demand within the Jewish community, each year before Passover, Raichik and his sons would go to UPS to pick up the boxes of round matzah sent to him by Korf.

One of Raichik's primary focuses was delivering the matzah to Jewish day schools throughout Southern California. In this way, he ensured that generations of children would learn about the special matzah in school before taking it home and insisting that their parents eat it at the seder.

"My father would walk into principals' offices and sell them on the idea," recalls the late rabbi's son Rabbi Shimon Raichik. "Then the kids had it at their seder."

"They Developed the Demand"

"What's interesting about the emergence of shmurah matzah in American Jewish life is that for most, their immediate ancestors didn't use it," notes Jeffrey Gurock, professor of Jewish history at Yeshiva University and author of *Jews in Gotham: New York Jews in a Changing City*, and more recently, *Jews of Harlem*. "The Rebbe's matzah campaign is very important in introducing it, and its authenticity resonated even among Jews who are not particularly observant."

Yossi Frimerman has

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The Hertog Study: Tracking Jewish Continuity Through Chabad on Campus

by Baila Olidort

A new third-party study on Chabad's impact on Jewish students at American college campuses challenges Jewish philanthropic organizations to

Among the misconceptions, said Rosen, associate professor at Brandeis University's Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program, was the idea that Chabad tries to influ-

According to the study, commitment to practices such as lighting Shabbat candles and decisions like choosing to marry Jewish as well as belief in G-d are bolstered among students who participate in Chabad on campus with frequency. The most marked results showed up among students from Reform or no denominational backgrounds. For example, as much as 46% more of the students who came from no religious denomination but engaged frequently with Chabad as compared with those who don't, decided that it is very important to marry a Jewish person.

The study also found that 36% more of students with no religious background became "very attached" to Israel as a result of their high level of participation with Chabad. And the number of students (from that same group) who took leadership roles in a Jewish organization grew by 25% if they've spent time regular-

came to feel that "being Jewish" is very important.

None of this should surprise. Chabad's been a compelling fact of campus life in North America for decades, and, without a study to tell them where they're at, Chabad's campus representatives have been impacting Jewish continuity with remarkable success. Being out in the field, interfacing directly with Jewish people from every conceivable background, the Rebbe's shlichim have an intuitive grasp of where and what the needs are, and a keen sense of what works and what doesn't.

Chabad's rapid growth on campus over the past 16 years, from 35 centers in the US to 198 (there are 235 worldwide), has been well documented. But this is the first time a study collected and analyzed data on the long-term impact of its work with Jewish students.

"Chabad itself has never conducted any empirical studies, but the shlichim were confident enough in the efficacy of their work to cooperate with an independent study," said Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, chairman of the Chabad educational arm. "Thanks to the Hertog Foundation, we now have numbers that confirm what we've been claiming all along, and this should be of interest to those who care about supporting Jewish continuity."

Understandably, if you are a foundation or a philanthropist deciding where your money will be put to best use, you may need the metrics to convince you. "Until this study, all the evidence was anecdotal," said Mr. Roger Hertog, president of the Hertog Foundation and the Tikvah Fund. In an interview with *lubavitch.com*, Mr. Hertog said that his high regard for the Rebbe and the work of Chabad motivated him to fund the project. "This is the first time that someone has put such data forward, and though we had no idea which way it would go, the evidence

is pretty positive."

It is late September at Stanford University and students are settling in for the new school year. Rachel and Dov Greenberg counted 25 RSVPs on their facebook page for Shabbat dinner. They set up for 75. (Fifteen years at Stanford have taught them to prepare for triple the number of reservations.) The living room and dining room of the Chabad House—also the Greenberg family home—fills up quickly, and as more students spill into the Chabad House, they pull out more tables. At 11 p.m., students are still coming in. There is no shortage of food, but now there is standing room only.

All told, 105 students—an impressive number considering that the semester hadn't yet begun—celebrate Shabbat with the Greenbergs. Dov and Rachel work the room, concerned about establishing a personal connection with each new face. The Greenbergs are now in the process of recruiting another Chabad couple so that no student gets overlooked.

"Judaism is not threatened by great acts of betrayal and abandonment," reflects Dov. "As the study confirms, it is endangered by small acts of negligence and neglect. Therefore it is saved by small acts of renewal and rededication—one deed at a time, one student at a time."

For Chabad campus representatives who are typically underfunded by Jewish philanthropies, the study may prove to be a useful resource. It may inspire in more funders the confidence of Mr. Rohr who has been investing prodigiously in Chabad well before he had the benefit of the Hertog study.

"For Chabad shlichim going out to their post, there is no 'Plan B,'" he told *lubavitch.com*. "Failure is simply not an option for them. There's no better investment than partnering with inspired 'entrepreneurs' who have so much skin in the game."



take a closer look at how their charitable giving measures up and where their investments yield the most significant returns.

"The study sheds much-needed light on the power and effectiveness of the Chabad presence on college campuses," says American businessman and philanthropist George Rohr, who has funded the establishment of hundreds of Chabad centers on campuses in the US and abroad. "As a result, philanthropists serious about investing in Jewish continuity will realize what an extraordinary opportunity they have in supporting campus Chabad Houses."

Underwritten by The Hertog Foundation and conducted over a three-year period, the study surveyed more than 2400 alumni under the age of 30 from among 22 campus Chabad centers and looked at 18 measures of Jewish engagement. Its findings, says Dr. Mark I Rosen, the study's lead author, "provide the evidence to dispel the misconceptions, and the data to support Chabad's claims to positively impacting Jewish identity and engagement."

ence students to become Orthodox, or to become Chabad.

It doesn't. But it did find that Chabad encourages students to deepen their Jewish identity.

ly at Chabad. The study also makes a correlation between frequent engagement with Chabad and the rise by 30% of students with no religious upbringing who consequently

'Energy in the Air' as Thousands of Teens Pack Times Square

"Am Yisrael Chai!" rang out in Times Square on Saturday night. Over and over again in the young voices of 2,000 Jewish teenagers who were gathered in New York as part of the ninth annual CTeen Shabbaton on February 25th. An inspirational Havdalah ceremony was followed by a huge celebration, complete with speakers and the lively music of performer Eli Marcus.

CTeen chapters from Moscow, Monaco and Brazil attended the Shabbaton for the first time, joining other groups from around the world, including 75 Israelis, to make this the largest international representation to date.

"You could feel the energy in the air," said Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky, executive director of Merkos 302, the division at Chabad Lubavitch world headquarters that founded and administers CTeens worldwide, as he looked around at thousands of students exhibiting Jewish pride, identity and happiness.





Mazel Tov! The First Jewish Wedding in the Kingdom of Cambodia

As the sun set over Phnom Penh, locals, tourists and guests from all over the world gathered for the first Jewish wedding known to be celebrated in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The bride, Shlomit (Irina), had met Rabbi Bentzion and Mashie Butman, co-directors of Chabad Jewish Center in

and a delectable dessert table is what the guests saw," he continues. "But everything there was the product of the hard work of my wife, Mashie. It would not at all have been possible without her."

The Butmans were joined by Chabad Rabbi Boruch and Mushka Hecht, who came with their children from



Shlomit and Vadim Mitropolitansky. (Photo: Serge Karloff)

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, several years ago and begun her journey to Torah observance.

The groom, Vadim Mitropolitansky, is an Israeli who now lives in Bangkok, Thailand. When the two decided to tie the knot, they chose to do so at the Chabad center in Phnom Penh.

The rooftop ceremony was followed by a festive dinner in the newly finished event hall on the Chabad center's second floor.

Local Cambodians, friends, relatives and Chabad families from both countries swirled in dizzying circles, following the lively music supplied by the keyboardist who had flown in from Israel for the occasion.

"In times of joy, as well as sadness, community takes the place of family in this part of the world, where most Jews are here without family," says Rabbi Butman.

Living in a country with no kosher catering, bakery or even stores, the Butmans are accustomed to using ingenuity and hard work to pull off events large and small. A wedding, however, presented its own set of challenges.

"Beautiful centerpieces

Bangkok. The Hechts have been in frequent contact with the couple, helping them prepare for the Jewish home they have now established.

In taking the traditional place of parents, the Chabad couples walked the bride and groom down the aisle to the white chuppah canopy that overlooked the Phnom Penh skyline.

On a personal note, Butman points out that the wedding took place on the 10th anniversary of his and his wife's own wedding. "They could not have given us a better gift than to be part of a wedding of two Jewish people who will be founding a beautiful home based on the foundation of Torah and Judaism."



Mashie Butman and Mushka Hecht escort the bride to the chuppah.

Csanád Szegedi's story is astonishing. As vice-president of Jobbik, Hungary's far-right extremist party, Szegedi fervently espoused anti-Semitic rhetoric and was a vocal supporter of the Holocaust denial movement.

Then came a revelation: a long-buried secret was exposed that upended his career and turned his life on its head. Szegedi learned that not only were his maternal grandparents Jewish, but his beloved grandmother was actually a survivor of Auschwitz, who had hidden her faith for fear of further persecution.

Life as Szegedi knew it, was over. Lengthy, painful and soul-searching conversations with his mother and grandmother revealed not only their Jewish identity, but also his own. Suddenly, the very religion he had despised for over 3 decades had become an undeniable part of his inner life.

Although Jobbik considered retaining Szegedi as the party's "tame Jew" in order to combat accusations about their anti-Semitic ideology, Szegedi was eventually forced to quit.

Horrified and angry, with his political career in tatters, Szegedi realized he needed to begin searching for his roots and heritage.

Unsure of how to navigate his new identity, Szegedi approached Rabbi Baruch Oberlander, Chabad's Head in Hungary and leader of the Orthodox Jewish community in Budapest.

Together, the two most unlikely of allies embarked upon a journey to confront Szegedi's dark past and reflect on his new future. The journey is chronicled in a new documentary film titled "Keep Quiet."

Directed by Sam Blair and Joseph Martin, the film charts Szegedi's 3-year voyage of self-discovery as Rabbi Oberlander guides him from the depths of personal turmoil and crisis, to the possibility of hope.

"Keep Quiet" Documents Journey of Former Hungarian Politician

"Csanad is inherently an interesting character, but the moment we saw him with Rabbi Oberlander we knew we had gold," says Martin, who has produced films for England's Channel 4.

own story: the son of Hungarian Holocaust survivors who escaped to New York, now returned to Hungary to help heal the community his parents fled in such a fractured state."

Szegedi is now a practi-



Rabbi Oberlander told the filmmakers that his guiding ethos is simple: He believes it his ethical duty to embrace every Jew regardless of their past.

Enabled by Chabad's acceptance, Szegedi re-evaluates, and is forced to tackle, the painful truths of his familial legacy, his own wrongdoing and the turbulent history of his country.

"Rabbi Oberlander is a wise-cracking New York Rabbi with a big heart and a lot of wisdom," Matrin says. "He was always tough on Csanád, never shying away from correcting him or pointing out his mistakes. It meant every scene between them had an element of conflict, which helped the storytelling. Furthermore, their odd couple friendship developed and was a great narrative device to chart Csanad's growth."

His colleague Blair points out: "As the film shows, not everyone in the Jewish community agrees with Rabbi Oberlander's decision to take Csanad under his wing."

But Matrin says he hopes Rabbi Oberlander will be "seen in the context of his

ing Orthodox Jew. He observes Shabbos, attends synagogue, is studying Hebrew and is trying to familiarize himself with Mitzvos. He has adopted the Hebrew name Dovid and is even considering making Aliyah to Israel.

The 93 minutes movie was shot in Hungarian and English and was an "Official Selection" at the Tribeca Film Festival.

George Robinson of the New York Jewish Week called the movie "a superb piece of nonfiction filmmaking, telling a story of import with grace and intelligence."

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Chabad Opens Center in 50th State: South Dakota

By Menachem Posner

South Dakota, with a very small Jewish population scattered throughout the state's vast expanses of windswept prairies, has long held the dubious distinction of being the only state in America without a rabbi.

That is now a thing of the past, when Rabbi Mendel and Mussie Alperowitz moved from Brooklyn, N.Y., to Sioux Falls—the state's largest city—to direct a Chabad-Lubavitch center that will cater to a community dating back to the days of the Wild West.

The young couple's arrival is being met with special attention as North American Jewry marks 75 years since the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—and his wife—the Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, of righteous memory—arrived on U.S. shores from war-torn Europe in 1941.

There will now be a permanent Chabad presence in all 50 states in America, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The appointment was announced to an emotionally charged gathering of 5,600 Chabad-Lubavitch rabbis and lay leaders in New York at the gala banquet of the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries (Kinus Hashluchim).

Alperowitz recalled a blessing to “fort gezunterheit—travel in good health”—that he received from the Rebbe as a child preparing to return home to England together with his parents, sharing with the crowd how those words are fortifying



South Dakota, known for the iconic images carved onto Mount Rushmore, will now have permanent emissaries to serve Jewish residents and visitors in the state.

Chabad shaliach,” said Alperowitz. “Like the faces of some of our country's greatest leaders etched into that faceless mountain, we hope to carve the image of our forefathers in the blank earth.”

The Rebbe would often refer to the United States as “a country of kindness” and expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the nation that became the welcoming haven for the Lubavitch movement. Poetically, the final state to welcome a permanent emissary couple is home to Mount Rushmore, the iconic symbol of American history and presidential leadership, which was completed only months after the Rebbe's arrival in New York and the start of his outreach work there.

The Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries' move to South Dakota is being seen as a boon for the state, its Jewish residents, and significantly beyond.

In the latter half of the 19th century, following the construc-

tion of transcontinental railroads and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, Jewish merchants flocked to the area (then the southern part of Dakota Territory). They established businesses stretching from Sioux Falls in

the east to the Black Hills in the west and were part of a prosperous community when the territory became a state in 1889. As with many smaller American Jewish communities, the mid-20th century saw younger Jews leave for larger metropolitan areas, with few returning back home.

“We have almost no grandparents in this community whose grandchildren live here, too,” says Stephen Rosenthal, a Texas native who has lived in South Dakota since 1973 and serves as the state chair of AIPAC. “Most of the Jewish people here now were not born here, and many of the grown children choose not to stay. Others come and replace them.”

One constant for South Dakota Jewry, however, throughout the years has been Chabad-Lubavitch. Shortly after the Rebbe arrived on U.S. shores, he began dispatching traveling rabbinical students to isolated communities around the globe, laden with heavy suitcases of Torah literature and Judaica materials, boundless energy and vibrant Jewish knowledge. From the outset, there were visitors to Rushmore State.

The young rabbis combing the state to meet with individual Jews scattered through an area of 77,000 square miles were often the Jewish lifeline for the small-town merchants and farmers who were the descendants of 19th century immigrants (Since the mid-1980s, Rabbi Mendel Katzman, Chabad-Lubavitch emissary to nearby Omaha, Neb., has also made periodic visits to assist the community.)

Rosenthal notes that the Roving Rabbis' visits picked up in frequency in recent years. “It used to be summer, then [also] Chanukah and then [also] Purim,” he reports. “It became something we grew to expect and appreciate.”

Although it has been widely accepted that fewer than 400 Jewish people reside in the entire state, Rabbi Alperowitz estimates that it may actually be home to as many as 1,000 Jews. He also believes that the Jewish population may have been bolstered in recent years by a strong economy and the growing financial and healthcare industries.

“Even though we will be living in Sioux Falls,” says the rabbi, “we will be traveling regularly to serve other Jewish communities and individuals wherever they may be, including the incarcerated.”

Rosenthal is excited about the educational programs the couple will offer. “We look for-



ward to them living here,” he says, noting that it will be a significant change for a community that has not had a permanent rabbi in decades. “We will develop a new relationship with each other, and I am excited for that.”

His sentiment is mirrored by that of Dr. Richard Klein. “I do a lot of studying Torah on my own,” says the urologist originally from Cleveland, “so it will

be wonderful to be able to study with a rabbi and increase my Jewish understanding.”

Recognizing that the local Jewish community is diverse in its level of Jewish observance, he says he believes that the Alperowitzes “have the wisdom to bridge the gap and help bind us all into a strong, unified community.”

PM Netanyahu Shares Personal Inspiration From the Rebbe With Australia's PM

Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Sydney, Australia, in February for a four-day visit to the country, a historic first for a sitting Israeli prime minister. Among his initial stops on day one of the trip was Sydney's Central Synagogue, led by Chabad-Lubavitch Rabbi Levi Wolff, where he and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull were greeted by an overflow crowd of 2,000 members of the local Jewish community.

Turnbull.”

Towards the end of the visit, Wolff and Central Synagogue president Danny Taibel presented Netanyahu with a framed photo of the prime minister receiving a dollar bill from the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—taken during Netanyahu's tenure as ambassador to the United Nations in the 1980s.

Turnbull has proven a forceful advocate for Israel, blasting the U.N. Security Council's



Rabbi Mendel and Mussie Alperowitz take a stroll with their children in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y. They will leave to become the Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries in South Dakota, the last of all 50 American states to get a permanent Chabad presence. (Photo: Elyahu Parypa/Chabad.org)

him today.

“Those are the words I carry in my heart, as my wife, our two daughters and I ready ourselves to move to the Rushmore State—the final state without a permanent

tion of transcontinental railroads and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, Jewish merchants flocked to the area (then the southern part of Dakota Territory). They established businesses stretching from Sioux Falls in



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tells Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull about the lasting influence of the Rebbe after Rabbi Levi Wolff presented a framed photo of Netanyahu and the Rebbe taken when the premier was Israel's ambassador to the U.N.

“I want to bring all of you greetings from Jerusalem, our eternal capital,” Netanyahu told the cheering audience, “never to be divided again!”

Along with Turnbull, former Australian prime ministers John Howard and Tony Abbott were in attendance, as was New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian, and various other Australian and Israeli dignitaries.

Netanyahu urged members of the Jewish community, and Turnbull himself, to visit Israel, telling them: “I want you to walk the streets of the Old City and hike the Golan,” before adding that “the Golan will never go back to Syria.”

“Thank you for this warm welcome, and this year in Jerusalem—with Prime Minister

recent Resolution 2334 condemning Israel. He commented in The Australian: “My government will not support one-sided resolutions criticising Israel of the kind recently adopted by the Security Council, and we deplore the boycott campaigns designed to delegitimize the Jewish state.”

Thanking Wolff for the rare original photo, Netanyahu walked over to Turnbull and explained its particular resonance.

“This is the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” said Netanyahu, “a great rabbi. ... When I came to the U.N. 30 years ago, he called me in and told me: ‘You are going into a house of darkness, but even in such a dark place, if you bring in a light, even a little light dispels much darkness.’”



In First Act as Chaplain, Rabbi Fulfills Wish of Jewish Soldier Killed in WWII

by Ruthie Blum

At a ceremony last February, the rabbi chaplain recently



US Air Force 1st Lt Levy Pekar

assigned to the Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, honored an American Jewish soldier killed in the line of duty days before the surrender of Japan in World War II, by granting his 72-year-old wish to have a Star of David engraved on his tomb stone.

First Lieutenant Levy Pekar, 29, who is currently undergoing basic training at the Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama — led the headstone-replacement ceremony for Staff Sgt. Jack Weiner.

Pekar said that Weiner's story "resonated with me on so many different levels. With both of us being Jewish and airmen, I felt like his story could have easily been mine. His story affected me on a spiritual level and as my duty as chaplain I knew we had to correct this mistake...I found out about Sgt. Weiner's story from his cousin. At first, it sounded like miscommunication, because we couldn't find anything about him. But after some digging, we were able to find the Quarter Master General's form that confirmed Sgt. Weiner's wishes to have the Star of David on his headstone."

"What we're doing here is known as the Hesed Shel Emes or the truest form of kindness. One of the best things you can do in your life is something for the dead because it is something that can never be repaid," Pekar added,

referring to how Weiner — a navigator assigned to the 345th Bombardment Group stationed in Japan — was killed in action when his plane was shot down days before the US bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki and caused the Japanese government to surrender.

Originally buried at Yokohama Cemetery in 1945, Weiner's body was moved four years later to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. It was during the move, according to the 15th Wing, that his headstone inadvertently ended up with a cross emblazoned on it.

"We have a sacred duty to protect our service members and we will do so in all cases, in life and in death," said Pekar. "It is easier to protect them while they're alive, but it becomes a bit harder after they have passed. I'm just glad we are able to set a precedence of correcting mistakes when we become aware of them, even seventy years later."

A few dozen members of Hawaii's Jewish community attended the headstone-replacement ceremony, reading psalms and reciting kaddish, the Jewish mourners' prayer.

On his Facebook page Pekar wrote of the event: "72 years in the waiting and 6 months in the making. My first step as an Air Force chaplain correcting a World War 2 era mistake and an incredible honor to be part of this rectification."

Pekar, according to a Jewish Voice interview in early February, was born into a Chabad-Lubavitch family in Monsey, NY, and grew up in the Beitar Illit settlement just outside of Jerusalem, the city where he was ordained. Today, in addition to his Air Force duties, he is studying for his master's degree in mental-health counseling.



Staff Sgt. Jack Weiner's new headstone that was changed on Feb. 28, 2017.

Photos: Tech. Sgt. Heather Redman.

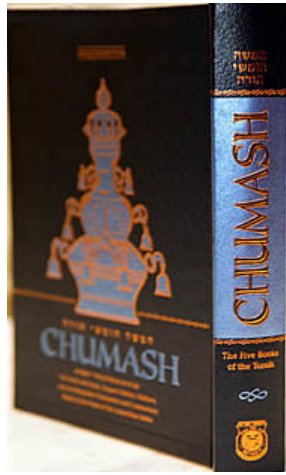
Montana Rabbi to Neo-Nazis: Torah Topples Hate

By Mordechai Lightstone

Although a neo-Nazi march in Whitefish, Mont., was postponed, Chabad-Lubavitch of Montana is continuing with its plan to "fight darkness with light."

Neo-Nazis had scheduled an armed march against the small Jewish community in Whitefish for Monday, Jan. 16—corresponding on the secular calendar to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, but canceled it after they failed to obtain the necessary permits. This followed weeks of targeted harassment against members of the town's 200 or so Jewish families.

"This is a chilling time for members of our community," says Rabbi Chaim Bruk, co-director of the Chabad House based in Bozeman, which serves the entire state (another Chabad center in Mis-



Some 1,500 households in Montana will get this edition of the Jewish bible.

soula, three hours northwest of Bozeman, serves the community there and students at the University of Montana). "Agents of hate are trying to bully Jews to leave Whitefish. They are wrong; the good souls of Whitefish are not going anywhere."

Bruk praised the proactive responses from local law-enforcement agencies, as well as elected officials, including Gov. Steve Bullock, in supporting the Jewish community.

In response to the march, Bruk has launched the Montana Chumash Project, an effort to give every Jewish family in Montana—some 1,500 households in all—a copy of the Kehot Chumash (The Five Books of Moses — with English translation and commentary). Bruk sees the gift, funded by Jews and non-Jews around the country, as the ultimate act of defiance against darkness.

"We do not consider it our job to protest the haters," says Bruk. "Rather, we wanted to respond with something they could never compete with. Darkness is allergic to light, and this gift is the ultimate act of light."

The gift of a Chumash for every Jewish household is a fitting one, asserts Bruk, noting that the Rebbe, Rabbi Me-



Jewish community members in Whitefish gather for a Torah class with Rabbi Chaim Bruk, co-director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Montana. The town was targeted for an armed neo-Nazi march on Jan. 16, Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

nachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, emphasized the importance of every Jewish home being filled with holy Jewish books to be cherished and studied, transforming the home itself into a beacon of light.

This is not the first time the rabbi has launched a widespread Jewish campaign. In the summer of 2013, he traveled around the state putting up mezuzahs on Jewish homes; he regularly tours the state promoting the observance of kashruth and other mitzvahs.

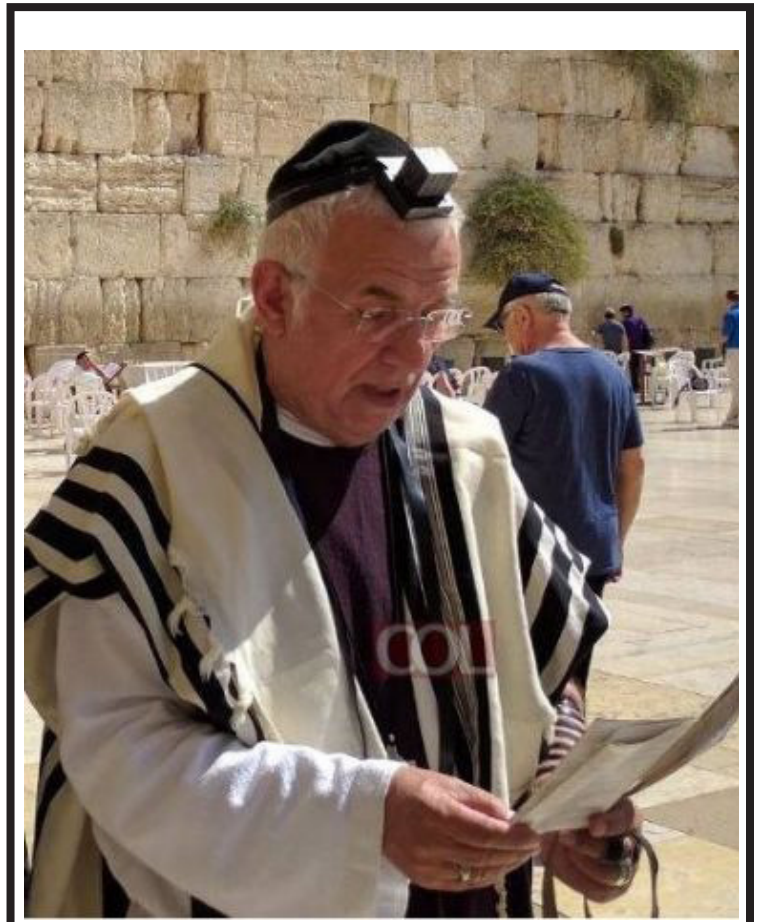
Stephen Schnall, a retired physician and resident of Flathead County who lives about 40 miles outside of Whitefish, sees the project as a positive

expression of the greater Montana community's backing of the Jewish population in state that's known as "The Last Best Place."

Since first visiting Montana 20 years ago, Schnall stresses the "overwhelming support" for his Jewishness that he has experienced from Jews and non-Jews alike.

"Chabad is known for taking one light and using it to create many more," says Schnall. "Something like this will really inspire others."

Readers can take part directly in the Montana Chumash Project through Chabad-Lubavitch of Montana's website www.jewish-montana.com.



A Christian pastor visited the Kotel recently. Asked, by a Chabad volunteer, if he was Jewish, he said: "My mother is." He ended up putting on Tefillin for the first time.

The Burnt Offerings of a Master Painter

By Michael Chighel

It was on that Monday that I took the bus to Beit Meir, the graceful little mountain-top village 20 kilometers west of Jerusalem, in order to visit Yoram Raanan. Yoram is a new friend, though the kind you feel you have known and cherished for years. When I first chanced upon a print by the artist a number of years ago—it was his masterpiece, “Mount Sinai”—it took my breath away, quite literally. And when I saw his work featured on Chabad.org, I grabbed the first opportunity to meet him in person.

Yoram and I paced up and down his lush studio, which was overgrown with exquisite paintings of biblical scenes and waterscapes and phosphorescent menorahs and glowing human souls—a veritable small Garden of Eden burgeoning with canvases, paint, and the uncanny ambience of something holy going on.

I remember our first meeting a few months ago. “I have no intention of flattering you,” I announced, just after shaking hands. “Good!” he snapped back instinctively, unafraid of insult.

“I will not flatter you,” I said, “because I sincerely believe that your work is nothing less than an event in the history of painting.”

He accepted my words with a smile free of both vanity and false modesty. And I, for my part, followed through by writing a long article, a kind of exercise in “art criticism,” in which I have attempted to articulate why the oeuvre of Yoram Raanan marks an event in art history, certainly in the history of Jewish art, if not beyond.

Then the Fires Came . . .

In the middle of the night that Thursday, on the 24th of Cheshvan, the village of Beit Meir fell victim to fires suspected to have been started by Palestinian arsonists. Yoram’s studio was entirely burnt down.

When I heard the next morning what had happened from the artist’s wife, Meira Raanan, the news knocked

Good’

Yoram wrote: “Studio total total loss.”

I wrote back: “Can you

two cents.

“Yup,” he says, with an almost melancholy smile. And he jokes about how of-

and gratitude as he enumerates the acts of kindness and appreciation streaming in from all corners. He insists on seeing the destruction as an opportunity.

We talk about the various mundane issues that will now require his attention in the next months: the damage assessment, the police investigation, the plans to rebuild the studio (“It’ll be better than the last one, taller! More mental space to think higher! To paint bigger!”), the need to publish a book of his paintings and the prospects of finding a patron to fund the book.

“What about getting back to painting?” I ask.

“Yes!” his eyes light up and his mind begins to race. “Absolutely! As soon as I have a space to lay down some canvases and start pouring out the paint! Let the phoenix rise from the ashes!” Yoram evidently intends to fight fire with fire—the profane fire of destruction with the holy fire in the Jewish soul.

I doubt many readers have the patience to plod through my “highbrow” analysis of Yoram’s work. I wish there were some simple way for me to communicate why supporting his work is, from the standpoint of Jewish culture, less like a luxury and more like a necessity. A number of very welcome initiatives have been set up to raise money to rebuild the studio.

Yoram himself muses: “Better than sending money, why not buy a print? It’s a ‘win-win’ that way.”

As a very biased fan of Yoram’s work and someone concerned with spreading the hallowed beauty of his art—no less than with seeing him resume his labors of love—I cordially invite the reader to check out his website: www.yoramraanan.com. And to keep an eye out for more to come from Beit Meir.



Yoram Raanan with some of the art destroyed in the fire

the wind out of me. All those masterpieces! The luminescent “Shir HaMaalot,” (on our cover) which took one into the Beit HaMikdash! The awesome convulsion of the Sea of Reeds in “Beshalach” (behind Yoram in the photo)! The haunting emerald “Esther” that had once been a painting of an eagle hanging in the Sheraton Plaza! The blazing menorah of “Vayakhel” in which gold of the candelabra had been alchemically transformed into pigmented fire!

The loss of so much beauty—all of it dedicated to Gd, all of it reflecting subjects from Jewish life and Jewish history—constitutes an inestimable loss for Jewish culture. It goes without saying that Yoram has sold many paintings over the years. But there were certain landmark pieces, including all but one of the pieces I mention in my article that still patiently awaited appreciative buyers. Besides the hundreds of paintings stacked against the walls of the studio, there were hundreds upon hundreds of sketches and half-finished works stuffed in drawers, which had slowly accumulated over four decades of prolific labors.

The prospect of speaking to Yoram himself after this cataclysmic loss, I must confess, made me quite nervous. Finding adequate words to comfort someone who has lost an enormous amount of personal property is difficult enough. Lost property is labor lost. But how do you comfort an artist who has lost an enormous amount of expressions of his very heart and soul? How is one consoled for the loss of deeply personal, spiritual labor? Before we had a chance to speak, we exchanged a few furtive emails before Shabbat.

‘This, Too, Is for the

talk? I can’t imagine what you are going through.”

Yoram: “I know you can understand and appreciate your concern. House and kids OK. Everything in and of my studio and surrounding area are completely finished. Gam zu l’tova. Shabbat shalom.”

Gam zu l’tova. “This, too, is for the good.” The phrase is a wonderful profession of faith in the face of despair. But to my mind, a hundredfold more astonishing and more wonderful is the

ten fire appears in his paintings—the flames of the menorah, the fire on the altar in the Temple, the fire of Torah.

Then, without batting an eyelash, Yoram immediately goes on to elaborate on how much good has already come of the destruction. “I can’t believe how many emails I’ve received! So many people are writing and calling and want to help out! People are coming to my website and discovering my art for the first time! It’s amazing!” His eyes are full of wonder



Acclaimed artist Yoram Raanan surveys the remains of his studio and 40 years of artwork that were destroyed in one of many arsonist blazes that swept through Israel. (Photo: Netanel Sharvit)

expression, jotted under such dark circumstances: “Shabbat shalom.”

After Shabbat, I have a chance to talk to Yoram face to face. He explains his feelings with the same characteristic simplicity: “With emunah, there are no half-measures. You either trust Hashem or you don’t.” He describes to me how, during the frantic evacuation of Beit Meir, he looked back toward the trees under which his studio lay and saw the conflagration rise into the black sky. “I resigned myself there and then,” he said. “Everything is in the hands of Gd. Gd knows what He’s doing. You know, it made me think of a korban [‘offering’].”

“Like an olah [burnt offering]?” I ask, immediately regretting my

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Dear Rebbby

By Rabbi Aron Moss



What Really Happened to the Firstborn?

I love the Seder, but one thing that irks me every year is the Tenth Plague - the Death of the Firstborn. I understand the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites and I have no sympathy for Pharaoh. But why did their children die? Couldn't that have been avoided?

Answer:

The slaying of the firstborn is central to the entire Pesach festival. Until we understand its inner meaning, we haven't grasped the full depth of the story of the exodus.

What actually killed the Egyptian firstborn? What was their cause of death? The Torah says that it was the Mashchis - a destructive force - that killed them. But what was this destructive force? And why did it kill the firstborns?

For a healthy person, there can be no greater joy than the birth of a child. Giving birth means bringing another soul into the world, continuing your family line and perpetuating life to the next generation.

This is true of every child born. But the firstborn has an additional power. The first child is the one who made you into a parent. This is a transformative moment. When you become a parent, you become a giver of life.

But the Egyptians hated life. They worshipped death. They gave offerings to their dead, worshiped a god of the underworld, and spent a huge amount of time and money on elaborate funeral rituals. This is seen in the pyramids, giant tombs built in honour of their death cult.

Those who don't value life don't value their children. Children are new life, and a death cult doesn't want life. They hate birth, and they hate their firstborn more than anyone else.

This is what killed the Egyptian firstborns: their parents' hidden hatred towards them. On that night before the exodus, when G-d revealed His awesome love for His children, the children of Israel, the lack of love

of the Egyptians for their children came to the surface.

Have you ever seen a child that is starving for love? They are dead inside. One night in Egypt, the inside came out, and those poor children had nothing to nourish them. They didn't die from lack of oxygen or food, they died from lack of love. That is the Mashchis, the destructive force that ravaged the Egyptian houses that night.

On that very same night, the first Pesach, the Israelites gathered in their homes with their families. While the Egyptians were being confronted with their own ugly hatred for life, the Israelites were celebrating life with the children that they loved. It was on that night that the Jewish people were born, a family nation who loves life, and will do anything for their children.

And so on the same night every year, on Pesach night, we relive that moment. We give our children all of our attention, we lovingly listen to them ask the Ma Nishtana, we do all we can to engage them in the Seder. We embrace each child, both the wise and the wicked. We tell them the story of G-d's boundless love for us, His children.

At the Seder, we spill wine in sympathy for those Egyptian children, and all the children in the world who are starving for love. We show our own children that they mean everything to us, that we love them just for being. And we pray for the day that every child be loved and every life be treasured, as is fitting for a child of G-d.

Wicked Children and Post Modern Parents

One thing I never understood in the Haggadah of Pesach. What's so wise about the Wise Son? He asks his parents, "What are all the laws that our G-d has commanded you?" He seems no better than the Wicked Son, who is criticized for excluding himself and asking "What is this Pesach service to you?" - to you and not to him. Does the Wise Son not also say "commanded you" and not him, thus excluding himself?

Answer:

The Wise Son and the Wicked Son are not similar at all. They are opposites. The Wise Son asks a question. The Wicked Son isn't asking, he is mocking. He doesn't ask questions of his parents. He belittles them.

It isn't his fault. He is a child of post-modern parents. Such parents don't ever tell their children what to do. Instead of giving their kids direction, they ask them questions.

"Do you want to go to bed now gorgeous?"

"What would you like for lunch tomorrow princess?"

"Are you ready to stop poking your sister's eye out cutey-pie?"

Parents who constantly ask their children questions and give them choices are putting their children into a position of authority that they are not ready for, while undermining their own authority. More than anything else, children need boundaries. They need to be lovingly told what is right and what is wrong, what is allowed and what is forbidden. These ethical lines have to be clear and unequivocal, set down with sensitivity but without room for debate.

But to give clear boundaries you have to be an authority figure, you have to carry moral weight in the eyes of your children. A parent who caves in to their kids' desires and cowers to their demands, who consults their children's opinion on everything and always gives them options, will never command the respect needed to lay down the law for their children. Kids of such parents see themselves as the know-it-alls and their parents as silly old people who haven't got a clue.

This is the wisdom of the Wise Child. He recognises that his parents are the source of wisdom, not he, and so he needs to ask them questions, not the other way around. He looks to his parents for guidance; he seeks their input and their point of view, knowing that when it comes to life skills, his youthful energy and idealism are no match for the experience and mature insight of the older generation.

A wise child doesn't come from nowhere. He

comes from wise parents. Ask your children too many questions and they will stop asking you any. Give your children clear direction, and they will become wise too.

"Do You Love Me?"

I have come to shul a few times now and quite enjoy it, but I have an issue with some of the prayers. I feel like a liar saying things when I don't know if I believe in them. How can I exclaim, "love G-d with all your heart" when I am not sure He even exists?

Answer:

You have been married a few years now, and I am sure that you love your wife dearly. But have you ever woken up one morning with a sense that you've lost that loving feeling?

Perhaps after a moment of tension between you, or maybe you have been feeling down for other reasons, or for no apparent reason at all, you just feel that your heart is cold and the love you once felt has disappeared.

What if, just at that moment, your wife asked you, "Do you love me?"

What should you answer? Should you be honest and say, "Well, I'm not sure. I don't feel it right now...?"

Not if you want to stay married.

You should tell her confidently and sincerely, "Of course I love you!" And that is not a lie. Because you do love her, it is just that the love is not manifest in your heart at that moment. It is there, it hasn't gone anywhere, but your heart is blocked, not allowing you to experience the loving feeling. Just because you don't feel the love doesn't mean that you are no longer in love. You are just going through a low patch as we all do from time to time, but the love is still there as it always was.

So it is perfectly honest to say "I love you", even at a moment when you don't feel it. And an amazing thing happens when you do. Your heart starts to melt. By mouthing the words "I love you", not because you felt

like saying it, but because your wife needed to hear it, you have reached outside of yourself, bursting the bubble of self-absorption that is probably the cause of the blockage in the first place. Now you are open to feel again. It won't be long before the love starts flowing back, more powerful and passionate than ever.

The same applies to our relationship with G-d. Our soul is connected to G-d, because it is a part of Him. But we often don't feel that connection in our hearts, because we are spiritually blocked, our hearts are frozen to spirituality. The love is there, just like the soul is there, it is just not felt, not apparent.

We don't have to wait for those feelings to come in order to pray. It is the other way around, by saying the words of the prayers, even without feeling them, the layers of cynicism and doubt start to melt away and our connection to G-d comes to the surface.

So you can pray when you are not sure you believe it, just like you can tell your wife you love her even when you don't feel it. Because not so deep down, you really do.

Is Academic Antisemitism Surprising?

I am shocked by the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the world. When Jew-hatred comes from backward extremists and street mobs, it isn't so surprising. But when university educated, well-read westerners, who know history and have access to the facts, are able to demonize Israel and the Jewish people, something is wrong. Has the world gone mad?

Answer:

The academics who single out Israel for contempt are guilty of ignoring the facts. But those who are shocked by it are also guilty of ignoring the facts.

History has shown that being educated has nothing to do with being moral. Some of the most cultured people have also been the most evil.

The Holocaust was committed by men who appreciated classical music and read the works of great

Dear Rebbby

By Rabbi Aron Moss



philosophers. From the very cradle of modern culture and enlightenment came the most barbarous attack against humanity the world has ever seen. The notion that evil stems from the ignorant masses, and the enlightened class are paragons of goodness is a simple myth.

Ideas have consequences. An education that teaches moral relativism, that there is no right and wrong, that there is no absolute truth and there is no G-d, is teaching moral confusion. And in a moral vacuum it is easy for the lowest of human impulses to take root. Civilized hatred is hatred nonetheless.

It is worth bearing this in mind when choosing an education for our children. Academics alone will not a mensch make. I want an institution that will not just sharpen my child's mind by teaching them to read and write, but will sharpen their moral character by teaching wrong from right.

Is it Worth Worrying?

I am a constant worrier. I worry about everything and I know it. Everyone tells me to chill out but I can't. The problem is, I always feel if I don't worry and something bad happens, I will feel guilty forever more that I wasn't worried enough. Now I'm pregnant and am obsessing about what may go wrong. But if I don't worry, doesn't that mean I don't care? I am in therapy, but do you have any Jewish strategies for me to get out of this cycle?

Answer:

There is wonderful old Yiddish proverb, which is also said to be an ancient Chinese proverb, and a more recent Indonesian proverb, sometimes attributed to Winston Churchill, Socrates or Dr Seuss:

"There are two things you should never worry about. One is something that you can't help, because you can't help it. The other is something you can help, because you can help it."

Some matters are simply out of your hands. Life and death, weather patterns and parking availability are G-d's domain, not yours. Worrying

about these is not just pointless, it prevents you from achieving in the areas where your efforts are needed. The precious energy wasted on being anxious would be better saved for more important pursuits.

An expecting mother's frame of mind has a direct impact on her unborn child. Your positive thoughts and trust in G-d are as vital for your baby as pre-natal vitamin supplements and pregnancy pilates. Worrying, even with good intentions, is not really caring for yourself or your baby.

When something worries you, meditate on this question: Is there anything I can do about this, or do I need to leave up to G-d? Is it my business or His business? If it's mine I need not worry, I need to do something. If it's His, I need not worry, He knows what He's doing.

Worrying is no more than a useless diversion from your real mission. Don't get lost in it. Those Yiddish Chinese Indonesians were right, leave G-d to do His job, and you do yours.

There's a Soul in Your Fire...

I notice that lighting candles is a big part of Judaism. We light candles every Friday for Shabbos, we light candles on every festival, and Chanukah is all about candles. What is the connection between candles and spirituality?

Answer:

There is something about a flame that makes it more spiritual than physical.

When you use something physical, it is diminished. The more money you spend, the less you have. The more petrol you use, the emptier your tank becomes. The more food you eat the more you need to restock your pantry.

But spiritual things increase with use. If I use my wisdom to teach, the student learns, and I come out smarter for it. If I share my love with another, I become more loving, not less. When I give a spiritual gift, the recipient gains, and I lose nothing.

There is no better illustration of this than a candle. When you use one candle to light another, the original candle remains bright.

Its light is not diminished by being shared, on the contrary, the two candles together enhance each others brightness and increase light.

We sometimes worry that we may stretch ourselves too thin. In matters of spirit, it isn't true. The more goodness we spread the more goodness we have. By making a new friend you become a better friend to your old friends. By having another child you open a new corridor of love in your heart that your other children benefit from too. By teaching more students you become wiser. And by spending time on meaningful pursuits, you realize how precious each day is, and use your time better. Keep lighting your candles. There is a fire in your soul. You will never run out of light.

Imagine No Religion

I don't want my children to be small-minded and look down at others, so I haven't given them a Jewish education. They have been brought up without any religion; they are free to choose whatever beliefs they like. I try to live by the words of John Lennon:

Imagine there's no countries / It isn't hard to do,

Nothing to kill or die for / No religion too,

Imagine all the people / living life in peace...

Doesn't that sum it all up?

Answer:

I admire your passion and idealism. You have obviously given some thought to your children's moral future, which is a credit to you. But I don't see how the philosophy you have espoused is any less closed-minded than fundamentalist religion.

You don't want to force your ideals on your children. But by denying them their spiritual heritage, you are doing just that. They are missing the chance to explore their Jewish identities during their formative years. They didn't choose that, you did. You have decided their religion for them. They are Lennonists whether they like it or not.

And if that song is your bible, then they are being brought up in a much more

closed-minded religion than Judaism.

You have only quoted one verse. But I think the last verse of the song is the most revealing:

You may say I'm a dreamer / But I'm not the only one.

I hope someday you'll join us / And the world will live as one.

So, according to Lennonism there is "you" and there is "us". You are the unenlightened ones. We have found the truth. But hopefully one day you will see the light and become one of us too. Only then can the world finally live as one. Is that open-minded?

Contrast this with Judaism's view that not everyone has to be Jewish. A non-Jew can live a perfectly fulfilling and meaningful life while remaining a non-Jew. They don't have to join us to be considered a good person. If anything can make us truly live as one, it is the recognition that we are all created by the same G-d, but we don't all have to serve Him in the same way.

We each choose a value system to live by and to teach our children. Whether you call it religion or something else makes little difference, it is a particular way of looking at the world. And much of what is presented today as open-minded secularism is as narrow and self-righteous as the most fundamentalist sect.

Imagine a religion that teaches its children to be proud of who they are, but that not everyone has to be like them. Can you think of a religion like that?

It's easy if you try.

Can We Play With the Facts of Life?

I am getting married in two months from now, and last night we had a meeting with the rabbi who will be conducting the ceremony. Something came up which I am quite uncomfortable with: the issue of only the groom giving the bride a ring, and not vice versa. This essentially represents to me that I am being purchased. The idea that there is a problem with the bride also giving the groom a ring seems absurd to me. Surely I have as much say in the agreement to be married as my husband-to-

be?

I know I am allowed to give the ring after the ceremony. However, I want to exchange rings during the ceremony. Gender equality is a very important issue to me. I am a highly educated woman, and I also value my Jewish identity, but I am quite upset about this. I would like to hear your opinion...

Answer:

I fully understand your concern. Many couples have asked me the same question. Coming from a modern perspective, it does seem a little lopsided for the man to give the ring exclusively. But I believe when you know the meaning you may feel differently.

The chuppah is an exact spiritual operation to join your souls together. It is not just a ceremony representing your existing relationship, it is a life-changing event that creates a new relationship. Before the chuppah you are two souls, after you are one. Still two individuals, with two minds and two hearts, but a united soul.

We can understand how two souls can become one by observing how two bodies can become one. The act of reproduction is the physical union of man and woman. In this bodily union, the man gives and the woman receives. Only this way can new life be created, a child, in which man and woman have become one flesh.

The physical world is a mirror image of the spiritual world, and the workings of the soul are reflected by the workings of the body. Just as physical intimacy is the union of bodies, the wedding ceremony is an act of spiritual intimacy, uniting souls. And so in this act of spiritual union the man, expressing the male power of being a bestower, gives the ring to the woman, the feminine receiver.

An exchange of rings doesn't create unity, just as an exchange of seed for egg would not produce a child. Only when the groom gives the ring and the bride receives it, then this singular act of his giving and her receiving produces oneness. Any attempt to alter that process would be, quite literally, counterproductive.

We can't play around with the facts of life. The spiritual life has facts too. May you and your partner be blessed with true oneness, and from that oneness may many little ones come.

In this issue we interview Ron Shuster, coordinator of Chabad's Mivtzoyim project.

AS. What are Mivtzoyim?

RS. The Lubavitcher Rebbe invented a revolutionary concept called Mivtzoyim. It's literal translation means "campaigns". The Rebbe launched a number of Mitzvah campaigns that can be practiced by any Jew regardless of their commitment to observance. With no introduction, one Jew approaches another with a simple question. It goes something like this, "Are you Jewish?" (answer "yes") "how would you like to light Shabbos candles this Friday night? Here is a small gift containing candles and matches and the proper times to light candles. Can I tell you a little bit about how powerful it is for you and your family to light candles together on Friday night?"

The Rebbe's goal was that EVERY Jew can be an inspiration to other Jews. Mivtzoyim in simple terms means reaching out to Jews and introducing them to the joy of doing an additional mitzvah.

AS. Do you know when Mivtzoyim was started and what the first campaign was?

RS. It was introduced shortly before the Six Day War in 1967. There was a perceived serious threat to the survival of Eretz Yisroel and the world Jewish community was in a panic. The Rebbe introduced Mivtzoyim (the Tefillin campaign) as a form of protection. He quoted the Torah verse "And all the nations of the world will see that the name of G-d is called upon you, and they will fear you." The Talmud says that this refers to the Tefillin. The Rebbe wanted every soldier to don tefillin, especially before battle. He also suggested that this is



how the rest of the Jewish nation can help in the war effort; by putting on Tefillin. And the first Mivtzoyim was born. Since then million have put on Tefillin in every conceivable place and situation.

AS. What is the purpose of Mivtzoyim?

RS. To illuminate the inner spark that all Jews have embedded in their souls. For some Jews this spark is shining and flourishing and for some it is dormant. Mivtzoyim ignites this spark by allowing and assisting Jews to perform a Mitzvah.

AS. Tell me about Toronto's Mivtzoyim project.

RS. One of the revolutionary ideas of Mivtzoyim is that every Jew rather than a rabbi can encourage and inspire fellow Jews to deepen their connection to G-d. The Mivtzoyim projects are manned by lay men and women, volunteers, of the community. I, along with some friends, coordinate these volunteers, arranging schedules, stations and materials so that the project can run smoothly. One of our favorite stations is in front of Justin's No Frills on Centre St in Thornhill.

AS. The idea of Yeshiva boys asking Jewish men (usually on the streets of the city) if they've donned tefillin yet that day is the original approach of Mivtzoyim. When did it get transferred to a supermarket?

RS. Our mivtzoyim program is very heterogeneous, we have booths in a number of grocery stores, plazas, restaurants, businesses, and at one point in time we also had a booth in Pearson International Airport. We try to "catch" and attract all Jews and therefore we try to be as diverse as possible as far as location and time are concerned.

AS. What is your personal commitment to Mivtzoyim?

RS. I, too, am a volunteer. I have an IT business and coordinate the Mivtzoyim project in my free time. When we go on Mivtzoyim we are well

equipped with material for men, women and even non-Jews. We have Shabbat candles, Tefillin, plenty of reading material.

AS. What is your personal connection to Chabad?

RS. My family's connection to Chabad started in the late 1940's, when my grandfather had a unique relationship with the Rebbe. With the Rebbe's blessing, my grandfather regained his life more than a few times, my uncle had children when top doctors in Israel told him that he has no chance to have kids and that's only a few of many Rebbe stories my family has experienced. I became very close to Chabad during my early high school years.

AS. How many hours do you personally spend coordinating these events?

RS. We have a few locations in the city that we visit on a weekly basis, such as shopping stores and high schools. In addition, I also personally make daily (pre-scheduled) visits to people to put on Tefillin. I usually do my daily Tefillin visits either before 8:30 am or around 5 pm and these are usually short visits. My Sundays are a bit busier because I arrive in the store early in the morning to set-up and if there are shift cancellations, I usually go in to ensure we have a continuous presence. If we run out of material or candles I drop in to replenish them, so I'm on standby every Sunday. I try very hard to make myself available as we have a few regular "clients" that come every Sunday to No Frills just to put on Tefillin. I also made it a habit to take my Tefillin with me wherever I go, such as going to the park with the kids, family trips etc. Interestingly, I recall once we went up north and I was hesitant to take my Tefillin with me, I ended up taking it along and Baruch Hashem met a Jew who ended up using it for the first time since his Bar Mitzvah.

AS. Is it difficult to get volunteers?

RS. That is in fact the biggest challenge with this initiative. While most in the Chabad community feel the responsibility to participate, people are occupied on a Friday afternoon or Sunday and trying to get them onboard is not always easy. However, many of the new volunteers that stand by the Tefillin booth appreciate and value the greatness of this opportunity and in most cases continue to come week after week.

AS. How many women are needed to volunteer each day and how many hours is a shift?

RS. The weekly shifts are one hour, however the daily visits that I make are around 5-10min as we put on Tefillin and say Shema.

AS. It is difficult to approach a stranger even to ask "are you Jewish?" Is there training involved?

RS. Sometimes it could be uncomfortable asking someone if he's Jewish or if he put on Tefillin. However, we find that Jews and even non-Jews don't mind, and even appreciate our approach. Often times we try to make it fun and entertaining. Another "tactic" we use is learning how to say "Hello, how are you" and "Thank G-d" in different languages. This makes people comfortable and therefore more approachable.

AS. Are children ever part of the process?

RS. Absolutely, I always encourage parents to bring their kids and often people have a difficult time saying no to children. My preteen son comes with me every Sunday.

AS. Which days are most ideal and why?

RS. We have official days we go on Mivtzoyim but I always try to carry Tefillin wherever I go. I was fortunate to put on Tefillin on a pilot, US immigration officer in the airport, a person filling up gas at the gas station and the list goes on. It wasn't planned but the opportunity came up and

Baruch Hashem these Jewish men had a chance to perform the Mitzvah.

AS. Tell us about the table presentation. What does it include and what kind of handouts are there? Do they ever run out of handouts?

RS. We try to make the table as approachable as possible. We have Shabbat candles, literature about Kashrus, Shabbos, Torah study, family purity and Moshiah. We also have a tzedakah box and on Jewish holidays treats are provided: honey cake, hamentashen, donuts, and whatever else is relevant. On Succot we have a Sukkah mobile (on wheels) and a Lulav and Etrog so people can do two quick Mitzvot, eat something in the Sukkah and Shake the Lulav/Etrog.

AS. Who funds all this?

RS. Thankfully we only require a small budget and we collect funds from various community members

AS. There must be both positive and negative reactions. Can you share some of each with us?

RS. We have amazing stories of people putting on Tefillin. One that comes to my mind is an older couple that I tried to engage but they were in a hurry going to their only son's first yahrtzeit. The wife started crying about the unfortunate passing of her son, I then told her that the best gift she can give her son is for her husband to put on Tefillin, thankfully she accepted the offer. That night she had a dream of her son talking to her; she ended up purchasing a pair of Tefillin for her husband following her dream.

Another story that I can think of is when I was lecturing in an IT convention in San Francisco and one of the people in the audience approached me after the session asking me if I'm a Lubavitcher. When I said yes, he quickly responded "so are you going to offer to put Tefillin on me?" "With pleasure," I answered and we did. At the same time, some people do get offended, but often after they realize that we are sincerely trying to help, many succumb to the charm of the mitzvah.

I encourage every member of the community and every Jew to participate in this campaign and Hashem should bless each and every one of us with all blessings.



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WEEKLY CLASSES - SUMMER SCHEDULE

SUNDAY

8:00 AM	CHASSIDIC THOUGHT	RABBI GANSBURG
10:00 AM	PARSHAT HASHAVUA	RABBI SCHOCHET
10:00 AM	LIKKUTEI SICHOS	RABBI GANSBURG
11:15 AM	TALMUD (MOED KATAN)	RABBI SPALTER
6:45 PM	CHASSIDIC DISCOURSES	RABBI GANSBURG
8:30 PM	SHULCHAN ARUCH	RABBI CHAIKIN

MONDAY

11:30 AM	THE JOY OF JUDAISM	RABBI SPALTER
7:45 PM	THE WEEKLY TORAH REVIEW	RABBI GANSBURG

TUESDAY

6:20 AM	CHASSIDUS	RABBI A. WAGNER
11:30 AM	TORAH STUDIES - PARSHA	RABBI GANSBURG
8:00 PM	TALMUD (CHULIN)	RABBI SPALTER
8:30 PM	HALACHA (ADVANCED)	RABBI ELISHA SCHOCHET

WEDNESDAY

12:00 PM	THE JEWISH LEARNING INSTITUTE	RABBI GANSBURG
7:30-9:00 PM	THE JEWISH LEARNING INSTITUTE	RABBI GANSBURG
8:30 PM	TALMUD (PESOCHIM) ADVANCED	RABBI WILHELM

THURSDAY

6:20 AM	CHASSIDUS	RABBI A. WAGNER
12:00 PM	TANYA (HEBREW)	RABBI GANSBURG
8:00 PM	IN DEPTH PARSHA STUDY	RABBI Z.A. GROSSBAUM
8:15-9:15 PM	TALMUD (BAITZA)	RABBI SPALTER
8:30 PM	LEKUTEI SICHOS	RABBI C.M. ZIRKIND

SHABBOS

9:00 AM	CHASSIDUS	RABBI GANSBURG
1 HR BEFORE MINCHA	PIRKEI AVOT	RABBI GANSBURG
1 HR BEFORE MINCHA	HALACHA	RABBI SPALTER

DAILY CLASSES

SUN-THU	9:00 PM	RAMBAM	ALTERNATING
MON-FRI	5:00 AM	CHASSIDIC THOUGHT	RABBI YARMUSH
MON-FRI	6:30 AM	TALMUD	RABBI SCHOCHET
MON-FRI	7:10 AM	CHASSIDIC THOUGHT	RABBI GANSBURG

MON-FRI	10AM-12PM	KOLLEL TIFERES ZEKEINIM LEVI YITZCHOK TALMUD, MISHNAH, HALACHA & CHUMASH - RABBI CHAIKIN
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Defeating the Soul of Evil

Continued from page 2

son is ultimately capable of committing any act, should he regard it as crucial to himself or to his self-defined vision of reality.

Ultimately, every good deed is an act of self-abnegation, and every evil deed is an act of self-deification. When a person does a good deed—whether it involves contributing a single coin to charity, or devoting an entire lifetime to a G-dly cause—he is saying: “There is something greater than myself to which I am committed. When a person violates the divine will—whether with a minor transgression, or with the most heinous of crimes—he is saying: “My river is my own, and I have made myself.” Good is what is good to me, evil is what is contrary to my will; I am the master of my reality. I am god.

The Soul of Evil

So, is the ego evil? Is this fundamental component of our soul an alien implant that must be uprooted and discarded in our quest for goodness and truth?

In the final analysis, it is not. For the cardinal law of reality is that “there is none else besides Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35)—that nothing is contrary to, or even separate from, the Creator and Source of all. The ego, the sense of

self with which we are born, also derives from G-d; indeed, it is a reflection of the divine “ego.” Because G-d knows Himself as the only true existence, we who were created in His image possess an intimation of His “sense of self” in the form of our own concept of the self as the core of all existence.

It is not the ego that is evil, but the divorcing of the ego from its source. When we recognize our own ego as a reflection of G-d’s “ego” and make it subservient to His, it becomes the driving force in our efforts to make the world a better, more G-dly place. But the same ego, severed from its divine moorings, begets the most monstrous of evils.

This, explains the Lubavitcher Rebbe, is the deeper significance of the opening verses of the Parshah of Bo. When G-d commanded Moses to “come to Pharaoh,” Moses had already been going to Pharaoh for many months. But he had been dealing with Pharaoh in his various manifestations: Pharaoh the pagan, Pharaoh the oppressor of Israel, Pharaoh the self-styled god. Now he was being told to enter into the essence of Pharaoh, into the soul of evil. Now he was being told to penetrate beyond the evil of Pharaoh, beyond the mega-ego that insists, “I have cre-

ated Myself,” to confront Pharaoh’s quintessence: the naked “I” that stems from the very “self” of G-d.

Moses did not fear the evil of Pharaoh. If G-d had sent him, G-d would protect him. But when G-d told him to enter into the essence of Pharaoh, he was terrified. How can a human being behold such a pure manifestation of the divine truth? A manifestation so sublime that it transcends good and evil, and is equally the source of both?

Said G-d to Moses: “Come to Pharaoh.” Come with Me, and together we will enter the great serpent’s palace. Together, we will penetrate the self-worship that is the heart of evil. Together, we will discover that there is neither substance nor reality to evil—that all it is, is the misappropriation of the divine in man.

If this truth is too terrifying for a human being to confront on his own, come with Me, and I will guide you. I will take you into the innermost chamber of Pharaoh’s soul, until you come face to face with evil’s most zealously guarded secret: that it does not, in truth, exist.

When you learn this secret, no evil will ever defeat you. When you learn this secret, you and your people will be free.

My Plastic Pharaoh

Continued from page 2

So I sat down and keyboarded out a letter, explaining everything, to the Guadalajara Rebbe. Then I fired it off to enlightenment@guadalajara.guru. I stayed online awaiting my reply. In the meantime, I electronically paid the bills I was incurring by staying online so long in order to get a swift reply. My little Pharaoh came in useful again.

Then it came. Verbatim, as follows:

“We are all prisoners. The act of existence is our crime. The universe is our prison. Our bodies and our personage is our cell. The keys to liberation are held tight in the fists of our own egos.”

Then a little note: “see Tanya, chapter 47. Also read Bringing Heaven Down to Earth by Tzvi Freeman.”

I meditated, I sipped licorice tea, I meditated some more, and I got it. MasterCard is not Pharaoh. “I want” is not Pharaoh. Neither is “I should”. It’s not the want or the should, it’s the “I.”

I looked in Tanya, the classic Chassidic work by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, chapter 47. There he says that when Gd gave us the Torah, He gave us Infinity. We connect to Him with the Torah and we are free because we are then infinite and unbounded as He is. And he writes, “...and so there is nothing stopping anybody except for his own will, for if a person does not want...”

Again, the same idea. We are all free. But our egos clutch tightly the keys.

How do I get my ego to let go of the keys?

For philosophy you can go to an enlightened tzaddik somewhere in Mexico. For practical, real-time liberation, I need The Rebbe. The Lubavitcher Rebbe.

This is the practical advice of the Rebbe, in a talk one Passover:

“Make a part of your life an act that takes you beyond your bounds, helping people that are not part of your family or circle of friends, doing something that does not fit within your own self-definition. Invite someone to your seder who you’re not so comfortable with. At first, it may not feel so good. But you have set yourself free.”

So, again this year, I come to my seder. I leave my own little world of my own puny self and I walk through the door into something infinite, timeless and eternal, because it is bound with an infinite, timeless and eternal Gd. I am no longer part of me. I am part of us and part of His Torah and therefore part of Him.

And to prove it, I say, “Let all those who are needy come and join our seder. No matter who.”

I have broken free. This year, we should all break free. Not just at the seder, but for every moment of our lives. Forever.

This year in Jerusalem.

In Conversation With Géza Röhrig, Lead Actor of Son of Saul

Continued from page 20

would rather make you want to disassociate with Jewish identity because of all these negative memories.

Growing up in an atheistic dictatorship I didn’t have the option to open the envelope, so to speak, to get my heritage. But I was certain that I would not throw it away without knowing what it was.

Your father passed away when you were just a small child.

I lost him when I was four years old, so obviously there was an emptiness, a lack of something that was driving me. I felt like I was nobody’s son. It’s important to have footsteps in front of you, even if you want to go the other way. If you have your father’s footsteps at least you know where the other way is. I realized that I could not even make an intelligent decision about if I wanted to be Jewish or not until I knew what it is. So I went straight from Poland to Jerusalem.

Was it difficult for you, an accomplished poet, a writer, and a musician, to embrace yiddishkeit?

As a teenager, I had reservations about institutional religion. I never really liked hierarchy. I felt like they tried to box you in, they wouldn’t be appreciative of having your own opinion or approach. And I felt that my background, my soul, my story, should be dignified because we are all different for a reason.

Then it turned out that yes, Judaism is pretty strict when it comes to practicing, but when it comes to what beliefs you hold

or how you go about things, there is a plurality and there’s a fantastically rich and colorful way of thinking in the Talmud. Rav A doesn’t agree with Rav B and they are still respectful to each other. And even the opinions that are not followed are written and preserved and still learned because there is a value of a respectful disagreement and different views. I found that super attractive.

How did you come to Chabad?

I was interested in Chasidut but the yeshiva in Har Nof, Jerusalem that I attended did not offer Chasidut, so my rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Baruch Horowitz, of blessed memory, suggested that Chabad might be the right fit for me. In 1991 I arrived in New York where Rabbi Yechezkel Lebovic and his wife, Pearl, offered me the chance to learn in Yeshivah Tiferet Bachurim in Morristown, New Jersey.

I had a bris. I got into the mishna class and started the routine like everybody else, except I was learning stuff that generally Chabad children learn at age five, six. But I advanced pretty well. My commitment was strong.

Then I began to study Chasidut which was new to me. I was thirsty to learn. I had a mashpia ruchanit, (spiritual mentor), Rabbi Dovid Vichnin, of blessed memory. He had an academic background, having studied at Yale, so I think he really understood where we were all coming from. He gave me time every day, to ask questions and discuss whatever was on my mind.

You mention “davening” a number of times. How did you integrate prayer into your life?

When I first started to daven, I was slow because Hebrew was all new to me, and the people around me were doing Shemoneh Esrei [the Amidah] in five minutes. I had a huge struggle with the Shema Koleinu blessing because I understood that this is where you relate to Hashem with your own requests, and there was a lot I needed to ask for others. So I learned to daven faster.

But the real issue was, what should my focus be? And I realized that davening is not about begging. You daven because you are, because you woke up; you see, you move. It’s about gratefulness and wonder about the complexity and the drama of the universe. Of course when you are in trouble you scream, but only then. That’s not what davening is for.

Do you believe that people “change?”

I don’t think people should really change. Can we become more G-dly? Sure, but we don’t have to jump out of our skin for that. The spark, the pintele yid is in our neshama from the get-go. We just need to connect and let it happen.

Is that a guarantee for happiness?

To say “be Jewish and you will be happy” is to sell Judaism cheaply and I would never do that. I believe that you have to find something in your life for which you are willing to give up your happiness. Only then will you be happy. We don’t look

for happiness as a goal—that’s a guarantee for failure. Because we were put here on this earth to serve. And joy, simcha, comes from avodah [service].

Do you feel that being an observant Jew informed the way you played your role in the film?

Absolutely. It’s hard to say specifically how, but I hope that twenty years of Torah study has affected me. It wasn’t like during the shooting of the movie I suddenly thought of a concrete concept. It doesn’t work that way. But it’s in the person I have become during the years. In the everyday choices I make. It’s in the fabric of my being.

The movie is difficult to watch. It is extremely intense for the viewer. With the camera on your face filling almost every frame in that hellish setting, how did you keep your sanity during the filming?

It was taxing. In the darkest moments—remember, I was playing a Sonderkommando whose job it was to escort thousands of people day after day to the gas chambers and then to burn their bodies in the crematorium—I often thought, “Dear G-d, where were you? How could you allow this to happen? Why were you so deaf to the cries and the prayers of all the yidden here?”

It’s a question that paralyzes your faith. So I’d remind myself of the living example we had in the Lubavitcher Rebbe who saw the destruction. His brother Dov Ber, perished at the hands of the Nazis so he knew, in the most personal way, what Jews went through in those years. And yet

he became an energetic leader inspiring us to look forward instead of falling into the crisis, which is what happened to so many people who were haunted by the Shoah.

I often had an inclination to be depressed, to sink into despair during the shooting. It was dark. These were the times when I found myself relying on the Rebbe’s example. That really helped me come out of it.

But your question still begs an answer.

Yes, but I don’t have it. Ilu yedativ, heyitiv. “If I would understand Him, I would be Him.”

And that satisfies?

I’m not trying to say that it’s ok with me, G-d forbid. Never, no. But we have to know our place. In this world of space and time we simply can’t understand and we can’t accept. I was with the late Elie Wiesel a few weeks before he passed away. He struggled with this question as so many others. I wish I had a magical argument to take all the doubts out of people’s minds.

But you? You are not paralyzed by it.

I’m not.

Why?

I only can speak of where I’m at. It’s unimaginable for me to stop being who we are and to finish ourselves off as Jews. There’s this paradox—on the one hand it’s clear that it’s really impossible to come to terms with what happened. On the other hand, let’s not forget that against the odds we are still here. Not only are we here, but yiddishkeit is alive. So this is exactly where I want to be.

Jewish FAMILY Life

Anger and Love Don't Mix

By Family Therapist Rabbi Avrohom Kass, M.A., R.S.W., R.M.F.T.

Some people think that arguments between husbands and wives are a reasonable and even a necessary part of marriage. This is not true. The goal should be to never express anger, bicker or have an argument. Some couples have achieved this ideal. However, if you and your spouse have not, it should be your goal.

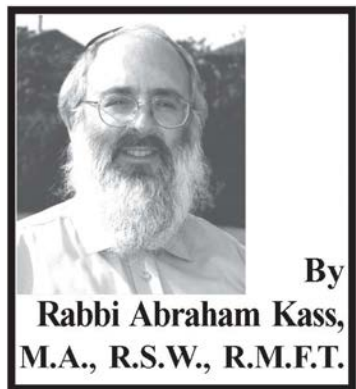
Anger has many faces. It can be expressed as: yelling, criticism, sarcasm, silent rejection, revenge or cruelty. Often anger is expressed in a concealed way to avoid detection. Regardless, the recipient of the anger attacks is hurt and the relationship injured.

As we try to avoid sickness, we should try to avoid expressions of anger. However, like illness, when it comes we deal with it understanding it is part of life. So too anger, should it come in spite of one's best efforts to avoid it, we should acknowledge it and move on. A healthy person can easily survive the flue, but a weak person cannot. The same is true for your relationship. If it is strong, it will endure the occasional mistake by you or your spouse, even though your goal is to be anger-free.

Successful marriages are built with "love" and "respect." The balance between "love" and "respect," are different for each gender. A woman needs to feel mostly she is "loved," whereas a man needs to feel that he is "respected."

A woman feels "loved" when her husband prioritizes her, seeks to spend time with her, is sensitive to her feelings, is upbeat and protects her. When a woman feels loved, she will naturally dedicate herself to her husband's wellbeing.

A man feels "respected" when his wife seeks his opinion, is attentive to his



By
Rabbi Avrohom Kass,
M.A., R.S.W., R.M.F.T.

needs, agrees with him when possible, offers praise for what he does and seeks ways to take care of him. When a man feels loved, he will naturally work hard to make his wife happy.

When each individual contributes to his or her partner's well-being, a stable and happy relationship will develop naturally. However, anger will drive a wedge between you and your partner, making these positive feelings impossible.

A person cannot feel loving toward the person "attacking" them with anger. Of the two, anger is stronger and will push away all positive feelings. Anger will fill the home with hostility and mistrust, and family members will prefer to be anywhere other than home. Anger is love's poison. Simply, if you

want a happy relationship, keep anger out of your home.

Fortunately, this tragedy caused by anger expressions is preventable. Here are three tips to help you remain calm at all times:

1. Never blame anyone else for your anger. You choose how you respond to any given situation. You can choose to be calm.

2. Know yourself well enough to that you can identify when you are angry. Everyone is different. Some recognize that their mind fills with negative thoughts whereas others feel body tension. There are many other signs that anger is brewing. Know yourself!

3. When you recognize anger "taking over," quickly take action to prevent it from getting to the point where it is expressed. Find ways that allow you to stay calm such as going for a walk, listening to music, not talking or distracting yourself.

If anger, as an unwanted, guest occasionally appears, quickly show it the way out. Make your home a special place filled with positive feelings.

Our sages of old consider anger a great sin and compare it to idol-worship. When angry, a person forgets that G-d is behind everything that happens. An angry person will lie, embarrass others, hurt others and even hate. Anger can lead to many sins.

Reject anger and protect your relationship with those you care about and at the same time preserve your relationship with the Almighty.

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New Edition of Psalms: A Beautiful Bridge between Supplication and Study

By Menachem Posner

The sacred words of Tehillim (Psalms) have always been a primary means by which the tears, hopes, fears and aspirations of the Jewish people ascend to the Heavenly Throne. Indeed, no single book of Scripture has been borrowed from so freely by the architects of the daily prayer service. And no volume is reached for so readily in times of trouble.

Yet scholars since the time of the Talmudists also have seen it as a text to be studied. Careful analysis of its Hebrew prose reveals great insights into its author (King David), Jewish tradition and the Divine. It was not accidental, according to the sages of the Midrash, that Moses wrote five books of the Torah, and David composed five books of Psalms.

The worlds of prayer and intensive study have long been seen as parallel but distinct forms of Divine service. That gap has been bridged by a newly released edition of Tehillim: Book of Psalms from Kehot Publications Society. The coffee-table-sized tome features large and clear Hebrew print with an eminently readable English translation.

What makes the book stand out is the masterful collection of commentaries from a variety of classic and more obscure sources, many of which have never before appeared in English.

The timeless words of the Midrash and the philosopher and scribe Ibn Ezra can be found alongside the insights of the Kabbalists and Chasidic masters.

The translation is also a commentary of sorts, carefully rendering King David's sometimes cryptic words into readable English. Occasionally, additional words inspired by the commentaries' understanding of the verses are interpolated into the text in a smaller type.

Another unique feature is the "Psalms in Prac-



rice," sprinkled throughout the book. Drawing from the corpus of Jewish literature, it features Jewish laws and customs that the sages have extracted by way of careful analysis of the texts. Like the other commentaries, each entry is meticulously sourced and footnoted.

The work is the product of a team of scholars led by Rabbi Yosef Marcus, and sponsored by Howard and Claire Glowinsky of Toronto.

Aesthetically, it is a companion of Marcus's previous offerings—the highly acclaimed Pirkei Avot: Ethics of the Fathers (Kehot, 2009) and Haggadah (Kehot, 2011). The silver-edged pages sport original artwork by Yanky Gitlin, and a medley of black text with green rubrication and miniature icons signify the nature of the various commentaries. An extensive appendix includes a comprehensive index, as well as bibliography of the hundreds of scholars and texts cited in the commentary.

True to the supplicatory nature of the Psalms, the edition is clearly marked for those who wish to use it to recite the daily portion of Psalms, either following the weekly or monthly track.

This outstanding offering, which is sure to take its rightful place as a major contribution to the Jewish library, is available at Jewish bookstores and at Kehot.com.

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In Conversation With Géza Röhrig, Lead Actor of Son of Saul

In Conversation With Géza Röhrig, Lead Actor of Son of Saul

by Baila Olidort
DECEMBER 29, 2016

Geza Rohrig is an Hungarian poet and actor who garnered international attention for the lead role he played in the 2015 film Son of Saul. The film won the Grand Prix at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. I recently met the 49-year-old teacher and father of four sporting a yarmulka and an untrimmed beard in his Bronx home. Rafi (his Hebrew name) introduced me to his twin two-year olds, Zusha and Zelda.

the Budapest Ghetto's liberation. It was published in Germany too and it received some awards. My other books are about anything and everything that falls under the human experience. I write for ordinary people—I don't want to write coded poetry that only the sophisticated can decipher. The film has now brought more attention to my poems, so I really cannot complain about the number of my readers.

In the movie *Son of Saul*, you play a Sonderkommando who becomes obsessed with giving a dead boy a ritual Jewish burial. This is a very dark, depressing film. What was it about this script that appealed to you?

The idea that there is something more important than sur-

level, and their job was to move the dead from the gas chambers to the crematoria. So what kind of a response can one have to this?

He couldn't save the living. He couldn't even bury the dead. So he decides to disregard the situation. There are very few things that are, for us as human beings, simply not negotiable: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to bury the dead. He couldn't give the boy his bread because he was dead. It was as if he was saying, "The only thing I can do for you is to bury you, to arrange a kaddish for you." This one mitzvah became his connection to sanity.

I have been with the chevra kadisha [Jewish burial society] for many years, doing tahara and shmira [washing and guarding the body of the deceased and preparing it for burial in accordance with Jewish law]. So I really connected to the script.

What made you get involved with tahara?

It began when I was a teenager in Hungary when someone from the minyan called me. They needed a third person. I now do it at least two times a week. It's transformative, in a way more than an average davening, which can become a bit mechanical at times. Every tahara is different and so personal. I think if we want to keep the right balance between humility and self esteem, death should never leave our mind entirely.

As a teenager, you started an underground punk band called HuckRebely, and you were expelled from high school because of your anti-communist activity. Did you have any religious affiliation as you were growing up?

Not really. My grandpa was the first person who took me to a Rosh Hashanah service. It was a terrible experience. I was 14, and the rabbi said that Hitler's plan was to kill every last Jew on the face of the earth, so we shouldn't be here. It's by G-d's grace that we are here.

Then he said that now that we are here we have to earn our right to live. I thought of my non-Jewish classmates and wondered, Why do I have to earn it? Because my family members were murdered so I have to earn my right to live?

How about if G-d needs to earn my grandpa's faith after all this? I was not interested in going to shul for a good while at all.

What changed?

I was in Poland studying for my masters in philosophy. It was 1987, still during communism. I had planned to go to Auschwitz but I put it off until the end of my year there because I knew it would be intense. I went there knowing exactly which barrack I would go to: Barrack 13 in Section E. I knew where my family was, and I just wanted to see it.

But instead of being upset I felt some sort of a healing going

on, and I wanted to spend more time there. So I went to the closest apartment building asking people if there was a room to rent and they said, "Here? Are you kidding? Who wants to come here?"

But I rented a room for a month. And I went back to the lager every day.

What did you do there every day?

I davened. It wasn't the usual davening [praying]. I didn't

know how to daven in Hebrew yet. But there I was, a freezing question mark, a pulsing wound. And I felt answered. I felt heard. I wasn't just in pain. I was in a dialogue.

Soon I realized that the only answer to this place is to be one of them whom the Nazis didn't want to survive. I wanted to look like, think like, and be like most Jews who were murdered here.

I might have expected it

Continued on page 18



Who are your twins named for?

Zusha is for Reb Zusha of Anipoli. I cherish his stories.

Zelda is for Zelda Schneerson, the poet.

You just returned from a visit to Krakow, Poland where you delivered the closing address at the Conrad Festival, which, as I understand, is one of Europe's most prestigious literary/art events. What was your message to the audience?

It is hard to sum up a half-hour speech. I spoke about freedom. You need tremendous discipline to be free. Freedom is the ethos of bearing responsibility. There could be nobody freer than two lovers, correct? But love comes with commitment. Freedom is not a right; it's our most fundamental duty. Without it, everything loses meaning. In short, the soul of the law is freedom, the body of freedom is the law. Where there is no freedom, there is no real order. And where there's no order, there's no real freedom.

You are well published in Hungary with eight books to your name. What is your poetry about? Who are your readers?

My first collection of poetry, *Cremationbook*, was published in 1995, on the 50th anniversary of

vival. Everyone wanted to escape, to break out of the hell they were in, which is legitimate. But it's an animalistic move. If the house is burning, even the cat will jump from the window.

Saul goes a level higher than that. He says, "Survival is not all there is. There must be something more than survival." I think that's a very Jewish belief.

What he attempts to do in those circumstances is altogether irrational.

It is. But everything that the Sonderkommandos were forced to do was irrational. Jews were being murdered on an industrial



Géza Röhrig in Son of Saul

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Today, the Shluchim, Chassidim and supporters of Chabad Lubavitch are indebted to the Rebbe for his unconditional love towards every Jew, his monumental endeavours on behalf of Klal Yisroel and for having had the opportunity to share in the fulfillment of his vision. We pledge to rededicate ourselves to his teachings and continue his sacred work with renewed enthusiasm and vitality. May we soon witness the rewards of these efforts with the imminent arrival of Mashiach.

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