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Chabad Lubavitch to Honour Ronnie Appleby

Chabad Lubavitch is pleased to announce that the guest of honour at this year's Chabad Lubavitch dinner will be our long standing friend Mr. Appleby. As usual the dinner will be held towards the end of the year and culminate the annual fund raising campaign. "Ronnie's involvement with Chabad goes back to his adolescence when he attended the fledgling Beth Joseph Lubavitch Talmud Torah," noted Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum. The honoree

is a partner at the law firm of Robins, Appleby and has been awarded the prestigious Queen's Counsel (now KC) designation in recognition of his outstanding and exemplary service to the Canadian justice system. Ronnie is known for his wisdom, judgment, and intellect and can be relied upon to provide practical solutions and sound legal guidance. He takes pride in his personal relationships with clients and sees his role as that of a trusted friend and



Continued on page 3

Yes, I'm a Proud Jew

Rabbi Zalman A. Grossbaum

Upon the suggestion of Yoseph, the viceroy of Egypt, his father Yaakov, together with a brood of sixty six descendants, headed south to escape the famine. They settled in Goshen, maintaining a docile lifestyle by tending livestock. Naturally, over the course of 210 years their numbers grew. Still, in comparison to the population of the host country their numbers were miniscule. Yet, Pharaoh, when enticing his subjects to subjugate and oppress the Israelite refugees he chose the battle cry, "Behold the Nation of Israel." Commentaries note, that Pharaoh was agitated by the uniqueness of Jacob's descendants. Some two hundred years after their arrival, this enclave of newcomers still retained an identity of their own. They stayed loyal to their values and had no interest to embrace the melting pot mentality. It was this unyielding character trait that got under Pharaoh's skin. Conversely, as our Sages note, precisely because of their unique nature to retain and nurture their values they were found worthy of divine grace.

Anti-Semitism may be a new catch phrase, but the notion is nothing new. In fact the saintly Talmudic scholar, Rabbi Shimon, drawing on a biblical narrative, declared, "It is an established fact that, 'Esav (and his ilk) despises Yaakov.'" History is replete with countless times and places when and where Jews were singled out and persecuted for no rhyme or reason other than their nationality. But even then it was camouflaged as a reaction of some perceived injustice. They masked their disdain with distortion, deceit, and fabrication.

Ever since the Pilgrims crossed the Atlantic, some 500 years ago, freedom of religion, has gained momentum and acceptance. Even the Soviet block, after 70 years of oppression and a concerted effort to eradicate religious worship, has made an about face.

Yet, today in democratic societies, and during the most blessed era of prosperity, anti-Semitism is once again rearing its ugly head. We continue to be subjected to blatant acts of violence and atrocities. Thankfully, government officials, and numerous agencies, have taken the lead to respond decisively and declared that this is unacceptable will not be tolerated.

Still, there is more that can be done, and each and every one of us can play a role. We dare not become intimidated by these acts of hatred. We must respond with a deluge of Jewish pride. It's time to wear our heart on our sleeve. So, if a Chabad'nick asks you to don Tefillin on a street corner, say yes. If you recently moved into a high-rise building, proudly affix a Mezuzah at the entry door of your suite. Consider using your Hebrew name whether it is Shoshana or Mendel.

Staying steadfast to our identity was the deciding factor that led us out of Egyptian bondage. So too, our unbridled embrace of Jewish life will certainly help to hasten and herald the long awaited Mashiach. Let's do it!

Best wishes for a meaningful and enjoyable Pesach.

Is the Haggadah’s Retort to the Wicked Child Wicked Parenting?

Child X comes to the Passover Seder. Child X sits down with his siblings. He makes kiddush, he washes his hands, eats the greens dipped in salt water and dutifully asks the Four Questions.

Then Child X asks, “Why do you people do this boring Seder, year after year?”

What do we answer Child X? How do you talk to a child who doesn’t feel a part of the family, the community and the tradition? “Wicked child! If you had been there, we would have left you behind!”

What kind of answer is that? What’s this doing in a Passover Seder?

This is a night dedicated exclusively to telling the story of our wondrous escape from slavery and exile, so that our children will understand that we still haven’t achieved the freedom we set out to achieve, that we are still in exile, but soon we will be liberated just as we were back then. How do we achieve that by further estranging an already alienated child?

Yet that’s how the Haggadah instructs us to respond to “the wicked child” who dares ask this question.

Perhaps it’s meant as reverse psychology. Perhaps we’re expecting Child X to respond, “Oh yeah? I sure would have been redeemed!”

Perhaps. Once upon a time. Today, that’s too big a risk.

What do we do? We don’t change the Haggadah. The Haggadah is Torah, and Torah is eternal.

Rather, we implement the classic Jewish technique of adaptation: Read deeper into the text and bring out a meaning that was waiting for it’s time to arrive.

So here’s how the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, read this response of the Haggadah for our generation:

“If you had been there, you would have been left behind. But here and now, when a new Moses will come and lead each one of us all out of our internal exile and all of us out of our external exile, this time no one will be left behind!”

Now that’s a much better conversation opener. Child X will certainly want to know what changed. And you will explain to him.

As follows: The Parent-Child Relationship

Who were the proto-Child Xers that were not redeemed from Egypt?

Idolaters, criminals, even gossip-mongers all left Egypt with us. They crossed through the splitting of the Sea of Reeds



all the while clutching a little idol in their bosom—just in case. Even Dathan and Abiram, the infamous duo that had mocked Moses in Egypt, came along and continued to give him even more trouble.

Even Jews who were reluctant to leave were forced to leave by the frantic Egyptians, like it says, “The Egyptians urged the people on, impatient to have them leave the country, for they said, ‘We shall all be dead.’”

Here’s what the Midrash has to say, somewhat paraphrased:

Having brought nine serious plagues upon Egypt and follow-

ing fierce negotiations with Pharaoh and his advisers, on the first day of Nissan, Moses announced to the Jews that they were soon to be redeemed from Egypt.

The Jews responded, “Hold on, Moses! We can’t be redeemed now! Abraham, our father, was told we would be in exile for 400 years. We’ve only been here 210. It’s too early to leave. We need to stay put another 190 years!”

So Moses explained that G-d desired to ignore the arithmetic and redeem them now. But the Jews responded, “Okay, but hold on, Moses! We don’t have any good deeds to merit redemption.

G-d can’t take us out until we better our ways.”

So Moses explained that G-d desired to ignore the paucity of good deeds and redeem them now. But the Jews responded, “Fine, but hold on, Moses!”

(Are you ready for this?)

“The whole of Egypt is filthy with our idolatry! Certainly G-d can’t redeem dirty idolaters like us!”

Yet, nevertheless, they were redeemed. Another Midrash explains:

“And G-d recalled His covenant.” This implies that they were not fit to be redeemed. Only

due to the covenant with their forefathers were they redeemed.

Why were these wicked children redeemed? Only because they were children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom G-d had promised to give the Land of Canaan. No conditions, no requirements, other than being the valid progeny of said progenitors.

Something very deep was transpiring here. Something that transcended personality, behavior, or even professed beliefs. A deep-to-the-core relationship between these people and the G-d of their forefathers forged by a covenant that could not be broken—much like the bond of parent and child.

And that is precisely how G-d instructed Moses to describe his people to Pharaoh: “My child, my first-born Israel!”

So if back then, wicked children were still considered children and still redeemed, why would Child X be left behind?

The River of Denial

Back in the era of hippies and draft dodgers, R. Cobb produced a cartoon illustrating two little piglets escaping under a fence. Surrounding them were miles of pig-pens, while a large smoke-billowing factory loomed in the background with the impressive

Continued on page 14



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.

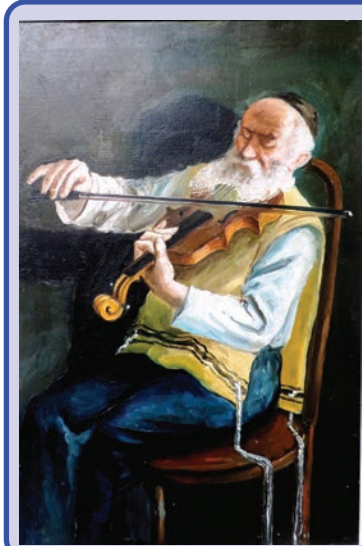
Passover is an eight-day festival, with two opening and two closing days of heightened observance and commemoration (Yom Tov). While the theme of redemption runs as a current through the entire festival, the first days of Passover focus primarily on our first redemption — our liberation from Egypt thirty-three 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

A painting by Chassidic artist Zalman Kleiman

Kleinman was famous for capturing the passion in the Chassidic community in his masterful paintings. Whether painting a dramatic scene like “Prayers on Yom Kippur” or a joyous scene like “Simchat Torah in Kfar Chabad” or capturing the wonderment on the face of a child as he opens the door for Elijah the Prophet at the Seder, you feel the passion.

Our sages tell us the gate of music is right next to the gate of Tshuvah (return to our roots). Hence singing and music are an integral part of Chassidic tradition. In this painting you can “Feel” the music.

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New Mikvah Building Construction Nears Completion

It may not be noticeable to passers-by, but now that the building envelope is basically completed, construction is forging ahead unabated. Indeed, with no inclement weather conditions to hinder progress at the new Gitta Ganz Mikvah, the interior is beginning to take shape. This is no small feat; to merge the multiple components and layered applications of plumbers, carpenters, and electricians. For the visiting layman the shrill sound of the stone grinder, the hissing of the plumber's torch, coupled with drywall sanding may be deafening, still, for Claudio Merenda, site supervisor, the numerous trades at work create a harmonious symphony. Our superintendent is committed to excellence and suffers no conniptions when tearing out a component if the work is not up to par.

Under the discerning eye of our interior designer Eliana Diamond, every detail is of paramount importance. "Eliana's dedication to this project is truly remarkable," said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum. "She views this project as a 1000 piece puzzle



Rabbi Aaron Grossbaum inspects the finishing touches on the children's programs area

by a soaring and soothing waterfall. The high ceiling throughout the facility and the towering doors help create a majestic aura. Above the immersion Mikvah there will be a large circular chandelier imbedded in a spherical bulkhead which will create a radiant halo of light. The seven spacious prep rooms adorned with fashionable fixtures, will elicit a relaxed and reflective feeling of spiritual rejuvenation. Special provisions are being made to also

the facility and host open house events for newlyweds and thus promote Taharas Hamishpacha. Indeed, the sanctity and security of Jewish family cohesiveness, which is the envy of every society, can certainly be attributed to the observance of Family Purity. Much effort and costs are being invested to create an atmosphere that will also appeal to the (as yet) uncommitted.

While there still remains much work to do on the ground level, the two upper floors of the Murray Goldman Youth Centre are nearing completion. With a separate entry from the north side of the building the eight multi-purpose rooms will do wonders for the Lubavitch Day Camp which provides a meaningful summer experience for some 700 youngsters. So too, our Friendship Circle which caters to youngsters with special needs will have the opportunity to enhance the ongoing programs and offer more innovative activities. Indeed, the added space is perfectly suited to accommodate the full smorgasbord of youth oriented initiatives which the Chabad Lubavitch headquarters in NY have developed and beta tested with great results.



Tiling work in the Mikvah area moving forward

that is best appreciated when every last detail falls into place and reflects the beauty of the whole."

Upon entry to the facility patrons will be greeted

accommodate mobility challenged patrons.

Needless to say, the design and amenities are of utmost importance, since our objective is to showcase

Toronto Chabad Camps Enjoy Record Enrollment

During the month of February, it is no wonder that the weatherman is still predicting snow storms. But, what many people find difficult to accept, is that registration for Lubavitch Day Camp and Camp Gan Israel are bursting at the seams. For the last month the phones are ringing off the hook at Chabad with calls asking to increase registration capacity.

Online registration for Camp Gan Israel opened January 1st. Within a day there were over 400 applications for the month of July when the girls are offered a meaningful summer experience in the picturesque Haliburton region. "Naturally, we would like to accommodate as many applicants as possible, and to do so we will be increasing the numbers per cabin, so long as the bunkhouses door can

shut," said Goldy Grossbaum, who works alongside her husband Yitzchak, as co-director of the camp. Indeed, the August session for boys is also filling up rapidly.

There is no doubt that we need to build more bunk houses, and we certainly have the space on our 207 acre site. But in order to do so, we must first address all environmental concerns which are both tedious and time consuming. Hopefully, after another summer of data from water works and satisfactory septic system metrics, we will be granted the necessary permits to expand the capacity of Camp Gan Israel Ontario.

Meanwhile, in the city, our local Lubavitch Day Camp (LDC) will be serving more campers with better and larger facilities as a result of the new

auxiliary building which is nearing completion. The upper two floors will provide much needed indoor space and will certainly enhance the capacity of the summer long program. "However," says Ester Steinmetz LDC Director, "registration has already reached our capacity, in the month of February, and I know many regulars have yet to register their children."

The camp theme this summer is "Join the LDC Team," and Mrs. Steinmetz is working feverishly to "move the goalposts" by finding even more facilities to open up more spots for more LDC "players" aka campers. Close to 1,000 children, and over 100 teenagers will enjoy the summer months as part of the largest Jewish Day Camp in Canada!

The popularity of Chabad

run camps is legendary, bringing together unmatched spirit, pride of Judaism and superb programming, meticulous planning and execution. The field trips,

daily swimming, hot lunches and door-to-door transportation which give children and parents the opportunity to be on the winning team this summer!



Chabad Lubavitch to Honour Ronnie Appleby

Continued from page 1

premier adviser to families and closely held businesses.

His jovial and casual disposition are most welcomed character traits and have the ability to sooth and instill confidence in his clients. Notwithstanding a demanding career, dealing with time sensitive issues, Ronnie always finds time for community affairs. Soft spoken and blessed with a keen mind and lots of patience, he has earned the distinction of being a consensus builder by finding and promoting the common objective amongst people with diverse perspectives.

Ronnie has received multiple awards including: an Honorary Doctorate from the Hebrew University, the 2001 Ben Sadowski Award for Lifetime Excellence in Communal Leadership; and the Outstanding Individual Award from the Ontario Law School's Advocacy Tournament. In 2012, he received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award Medal from the Government of Canada. Still, the one award that has eluded him is the trophy of the annual Clubbish Tournament, sponsored by Robin, Appleby LLP. Ronnie is married to Bunnie, and they have four married children, and nine grandchildren.

In summary Rabbi Grossbaum noted, "Ever since I was awarded the honour and tasked to serve at the helm of Chabad Lubavitch of Southern Ontario almost 50 years ago, our honouree was the "go to" guy for counsel and guidance. It gives me much pleasure to have the opportunity to recognize and pay tribute to a most deserving public servant.

This year the campaign theme is "It's about time!" The moniker underscores our return to conventional living after two and a half years of Covid restrictions. Notwithstanding the nationwide shutdown, Chabad Lubavitch made every effort to be cre-

ative and maintain almost all programs and projects, albeit under strict guidelines and the necessary adjustments. Still we did not escape unscathed, and as we return to normalcy we gratefully declared, "It's About Time!"

But when getting back into full swing we faced up to our first challenge; lack of adequate space. After much thought and careful consideration we decided to build an additional building on our 3 acre site. The 13,000 sq. ft facilities under construction will house a new Mikvah on the ground floor. The upper two levels will provide much needed space for the Lubavitch Day Camp and the Friendship Circle which caters to children with special needs. Yes, It's About Time!

From the flagship centre in Thornhill, Chabad Lubavitch provides a wide range of programs that educate and promote traditional values to the entire Jewish community. This objective is further augmented by some 25 satellite centres, strategically positioned throughout the GTA and beyond. Most recently another "outpost" has been established in the neighbouring area of Etobicoke. So too, there are Chabad House student centres at all major universities along the southern rim of Ontario.

Due to Covid restrictions we could not celebrate the culmination of our annual campaign with a gala dinner. This event brings together friends and supporters from the entire spectrum of our community. The occasion also provides an opportunity to highlight our most recent accomplishments and our new initiatives. So too, it enables us to pay tribute to a worthy guest of honour.

This year we are most pleased to honour Ronnie Appleby, in appreciation for his long standing involvement, wise counsel, and generous support. Indeed, It's About Time!

Jeff Brought Chabad to Guelph, Now It Carries His Name



Jeff and Lisa White

In 1990, Jeff White graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College in Canada’s “Royal City” — Guelph, Ontario. Jeff put himself through university working as a framing carpenter and ultimately started his own company. After marrying his wife, Lisa, he practiced as a vet for a short while and then joined his good friend and business partner to lead a local homebuilding and land development company. The family was traditional, and when their eldest son Jonas went off to college at Western University, an hour and a half west in London, Ontario, Chabad on Campus became his second home.

After graduating with a business degree, Jonas was off to yeshiva. Jeff and Lisa’s daughters Emily and Jocelyn followed in their brother’s footsteps at Western University, becoming a regular at Rabbi Mordechai and Nechamie Silberberg’s Chabad on Campus. Back in Guelph, the Whites supported their children’s move towards observant Judaism, and Jeff even turned his tireless work ethic to the task of bringing a Chabad House to Guelph itself.

In 2012, Jeff renovated a building his company owned (just down the

road from the Veterinary College) and Chabad of Guelph was born. “When we kicked off each year with a barbeque, Jeff would be there to ensure the propane tank was full,” Rabbi Raphi Steiner says. “He was a true pillar of the community, and a mensch.” After only a few years of seeing the growth and success of the Chabad of Guelph, Jeff tragically passed away from a sudden cardiac incident at the age of fifty-five in the summer of 2017.

On Jeff’s 5th yearzeit, his wife Lisa, in keeping with their vision for Jewish Guelph, donated the property to the Chabad of Guelph in loving memory of her husband. In recognition of the dedication and for giving Chabad of Guelph a permanent home, the Chabad House was renamed the Dr. Jeff & Lisa White Chabad of Guelph.

“We miss Jeff sorely every day,” Rabbi Steiner says. The Chabad House hosts Shabbat meals, services, and classes for University students and local Jews. “Our Shabbat meals are often so full, we have to seat people in the laundry room,” he says, “and I can imagine how Jeff would smile at that.”



Rabbi Raphi Steiner gives a lunchtime Torah class.

Annual Pegisha Ontario Starts with a Rohring Success

by Moshe Goldman and Vidal Bekerman

Niagara Falls. Who among us has not been mesmerized by its power and beauty? We are fortunate to live in such close proximity to a wonder of the world.

Over the Shabbos of Feb. 17-18, 120 students from universities from Alberta to Quebec, and including most schools in Ontario, gathered for an inspiring Shabbaton near the Falls, together with the dedicated rabbis and rebbetzins serving at Chabad on campus across the nation. Graciously hosted by Rabbi & Mrs. Zaltzman of Chabad of Niagara (and Brock University), and coordinated by Rabbi & Mrs. Swued, who began their shlichus at Chabad of Western this year. This was the second annual national Pegisha Shabbaton, with many more planned for the coming years. This was all made possible by a generous grant from the indefatigable Rohr Family via Chabad on Campus International.

“This shabbaton was a spiritual experience,” said Dalia, a foreign exchange student at York University, originally from Panama. “It is a moment of peace and community where your friends become like family. I am extremely grateful for this experience and would recommend it to anyone who wants to reconnect with themselves, their surroundings and G-d.”

High school shabbatons are noted for their high-energy atmosphere. The campus shabbaton experience matures along with the students, who are no longer interested in games and songs alone. They are thinking about the important things in life, and Chabad is there to nurture and guide them in their journey. Workshops on relationships, mental health, creativity, and of course, classes on Tanya, Purim, and the weekly Torah portion were all artfully woven into the program.

That doesn’t mean there was no fun to be had; on Saturday night, Asher from the University

of Waterloo had this to say during the exuberant dancing following the Havdalah ceremony: “I’ve never seen rabbis having this much fun in my life!” As a magician roamed the room, and a chassidic artist led a screen printing workshop, students en-

joyed yet another delicious meal and lingered to chat with friends new and old.



joyed yet another delicious meal and lingered to chat with friends new and old.

“This was the best shabbaton I have been to, and I have been to a lot of them,” said Yair from Thornhill. “The people, food, simcha, hospitality, classes and enjoyable farbrengen with Rabbi Wagner from the yeshiva in Morristown, made this a Shabbat experience that I will never forget.”

“It was a great privilege to help bring students together,” said Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky of the Chabad Student Network in Ottawa. “There was such a great sense of much needed unity among the students, who came from all walks of life. They have been separated for so many years during the pandemic, and the feedback we have been receiving from our students has been phenomenal!”

During a sumptuous breakfast on Sunday morning, and following the screening of the weekly “Living Torah” video of the Rebbe, Mrs. Rivky Goldman of Chabad in Waterloo closed the

home with us from this event.”

Students were given cards and pens, and encouraged to think about their experiences over the shabbaton, and to take good resolutions upon themselves moving forward. One student decided it was time for him to perform the mitzvah of a bris, which he never had.

The rest of the story is still unfolding... and Chabad on campus will be there to ensure that it develops in the best possible way.

Participating Shluchim were Rabbi & Mrs. Banon (University of Montreal), Rabbi & Mrs. Bekerman (York), Rabbi & Mrs. Berkowitz (Concordia), Rabbi & Mrs. Blachman (University of Edmonton), Rabbi & Mrs. Boyarsky (Carleton & Ottawa), Rabbi & Mrs. Goldman (Waterloo), Rabbi & Mrs. Silberberg (Western), Rabbi & Mrs. Swued (Western), Rabbi & Mrs. Zaltzman (Brock). As well, students attended from Guelph, McMaster, Queens, University of Toronto and Toronto Metropolitan University.

Megillah Read at Toronto City Hall

The sound of Graggers drowning out the name of Haman, emanating from Committee Room 4 in Toronto City Hall, had heads turning as curious passersby peeked in to see what the commotion was.

Once again, this year, Rabbi Moshe Spalter, administrator of Chabad Lubavitch of Southern Ontario, led a lunchtime Megillah reading for those who work downtown and are unable to hear the Megilla read in Shul.

With the help of Councillor James Pasternak and his staff a room was secured in City Hall for Purim day, to facilitate the Purim celebration.

Mishloach Manot packages were distributed to all participants enabling them to fulfill the mitzvah of sharing food gifts with a friend on Purim.



Rabbi Moshe Spalter with Councillor James Pasternak in front of Toronto City Hall

Chabad on the Edge

Bringing Jewish Life to Outlying Communities

By Yehudis Danzinger

For the Chabad Rabbis and Rebbetzins who settle in areas outside of the established Jewish community, the Centre they build will be unique. Often, they are the first openly Jewish presence in the region, and the first task will be to find local Jews - sometimes in remarkable, serendipitous ways - and then listen to the stories of these lone Jews and tailor the new Centre to their specific needs. Every cen-

sion. Rabbi Zevi and Rebbetzin Mussy Kaplan moved to Innisfil in 2022, and have found a warm and welcoming reception among the many young families who moved there for affordable housing in the hope that Jewish life would grow around them.

In the short time they have been in Innisfil the Kaplans already established a Hebrew school, organized Torah classes, held a women's event, hosted holiday and teen programs. They

ally knew how many Jews lived in the region.

Like the Kaplans, a chance meeting helped them choose their location. Rabbi Blotner and his wife were strolling in a park near Lake Ontario when they met a fellow Jew who told them that he lived in Etobicoke and he wished they had a Chabad Rabbi there.

The Blotners decided to investigate. Rabbi Blotner began making house calls to homes where the residents had Jewish-sounding last names. In every case he was received warmly; the non-Jews were impressed that a Rabbi would seek out his co-religionists with such personal care, and the Jewish people he encountered said every time, "Rabbi, I am so happy to see you! But how did you find me? I am the only Jew in Etobicoke!"

The Blotners soon realized that the many unaffiliated, isolated Jews in Etobicoke all believed they were alone, and all needed a unified sense of connection and community. With tremendous energy and excitement, the Blotners moved to Etobicoke and the results have been heartwarming and continually exceeding their expectations.

Prepared for a slow start, they held High Holiday services, not knowing if anyone would show up. Surprisingly, that first Rosh Hashana twenty people attended, and by Yom Kippur they already had thirty participants. Their first Chanuka program brought together more than sixty people, and of the one hundred and fifty Jews they have already built ties to, every single one told them initially, "We are the only Jews in Etobicoke."

Local families are thrilled to discover not only a knowledgeable Rabbi and Rebbetzin

are bringing people together and building a new Jewish community, and they find everyone they meet genuinely appreciative.

The lack of local kosher food, daily prayer services, or Jewish day schools are challenges the Kaplans face matter-of-factly. They make the hour-long trip to Thornhill regularly to stock up on food, and they don't yet have a child old enough for elementary school. With positive determination, Rabbi Kaplan expects in the coming years he will be able to build up the Jewish infrastructure currently lacking in his area.

Innisfil has ambitious plans to expand as a town and the Kaplans anticipate commensurate growth within the Jewish community, as the high cost of housing drives more and more people out of Toronto.

"It's a beautiful place to raise a family," Rabbi Kaplan says as he describes his plans for Jewish life in Innisfil, and his enthusiasm and optimism for the burgeoning Jewish community is infectious.

2022 saw another young couple move as Chabad emissaries to an outlying area: Rabbi Doni and Rebbetzin Chaya Blotner. When they launched Chabad of Etobicoke no one re-



The Blotner Family with the Chabad Etobicoke Sukkah

tre grows organically, individualized by the personalities of its Rabbi, Rebbetzin, and community members.

In every instance, though, the Chabad couples in these locations share certain things in common: the challenge of living as orthodox Jews without proximity to kosher food, daily prayer services, or nearby Jewish day schools for their children, and the burning idealism to bring Jewish life to their chosen locales.

"When we were investigating the possibility of moving to Innisfil, we took a trip there to look around and try to assess the potential for a Chabad Centre in the area," relates Rabbi Zevi Kaplan. "On our way we ran low on gas and stopped at a local gas station to fill up, when a man from another car approached us and asked, 'Excuse me, are you Chabad?' After I helped him put on Tefillin - surely a first in a rural gas station in that area - he told me that his family had sold their house in Toronto and moved to Innisfil, but they were worried there would be no Jewish life for their children growing up."

That providential meeting seemed like a signpost pointing the Kaplans towards their mis-



Rabbi Zevi Kaplan at the menorah lighting at the Innisfil town hall, together with member of parliament John Brassard, Mayor, Lynn Dollin, Deputy Mayor Kenneth Fowler, and other members of council.



The Danforth Beaches Menorah and the Lezell Family

so at least there would be lively dancing and music regardless.

Happily, a substantial number of locals joined the event, braving the cold to appreciate the light of the menorah and share in the joyous celebration. One woman with four children

served by Rabbi Mendy Grossbaum and his wife Libby since 2017. With a community of an estimated 1,500 Jewish residents mostly composed of families, the Grossbaums focus on children's programming, social and holiday events, and classes. They value one-on-one connection with their community members to build real and lasting relationships. The Grossbaums are driven to create a dynamic Jewish life for the residents of Newmarket.

Admittedly, there are challenges for an Orthodox family residing a distance from the established Jewish community in Toronto, but that is the cost of shouldering the responsibility to support a new Jewish neighborhood. The Grossbaums counter any isolation by visiting family regularly, accessing online Jewish programs for their children, and taking trips to town.

The challenge is insignificant though, when measured against the deep satisfaction that comes from sharing 'Yiddishkeit' with their community, and the vast reward their children gain by living a life focused on helping others.

"The other day I helped a man put on tefillin in Newmarket," Rabbi Grossbaum says. "In the course of our conversation he mentioned that he had seen me previously, in fact we had been on the same plane a few days earlier and he had also seen me at a kosher restaurant in Florida. This struck me forcibly as a frum Jew, and especially as a Lubavitch shliach, the realization that we stand out and people are constantly looking to us for inspiration."

On the southern end of the city, Rabbi Sholom Lezell agrees that being visibly Jewish and Chabad drew attention from Jews in the neighborhood when



Newmarket Challah Bake with Libby Grossbaum (2nd from left)

to provide Jewish programming and services, but also a whole community of other Jews to befriend. Facilitating that sense of connection between Jews is an unexpected reward to the job. The Blotners discovered two Israeli families living around the corner from them, and invited both for Shabbat dinner. The Israelis living near one another had never met before the Blotners introduced them. There are Jews everywhere, longing for other Jews to socialize with.

When the Blotners decided to host a public menorah lighting celebration on their first Chanuka in Etobicoke, they couldn't predict if any local Jews would attend. They decided to invite some students from the Toronto yeshiva to the menorah lighting,

told the Rabbi that her children were so excited to celebrate Chanuka that she would like to host her own small gathering the following evening if the Rabbi would take part. The next night he joined her event and she explained what a lasting impression the dancing yeshiva students had made on her children, and she reiterated that her whole family was deeply inspired by the experience.

Rabbi Blotner speaks excitedly about his plans for the future; he expects to build a thriving, 'full-service' Jewish community in Etobicoke, with a synagogue, mikvah, community centre, and all the resources necessary for Jewish life.

Another outlying neighborhood, Newmarket, has been

Chabad on the Edge

Bringing Jewish Life to Outlying Communities

he first arrived with his wife Devora to run Chabad of Danforth-Beaches in 2007.

Initially, the biggest challenge in their work was to get people to openly identify as Jewish and want to participate. Most of the people they connected with would not have considered themselves part of any Jewish community, and they were wary to join Chabad. As they grew to know the Lezells and the Chabad Centre became an established familiar presence, local Jews felt open and comfortable joining enthusiastically in activities. The community grew in size and friendship.

Although the Lezells moved to the Beaches to provide Jewish services to residents nearby, over time they also developed meaningful personal relationships with people in the close-knit community, an unexpected reward of working and living in a smaller area.

They educate their children at Jewish schools in Toronto, which requires long, daily commutes on top of their busy schedule as an established Chabad centre, but driving twice

for several mezuzahs in one week.

The Borensteins observed another need in their region: there was no kosher food at local hospitals so they made it their mission to arrange for the availability of kosher food for visitors to the hospital. When they discovered a mental health centre nearby with Jewish clients, the Borensteins added visits to patients to their growing list of responsibilities. Wherever they find a Jew with a need, they feel it is their duty and privilege to help out.

Another project that Rabbi Borenstein had the privilege to initiate was sensitivity training at the local police services. Every new officer is required to meet with the Rabbi to learn about Jewish traditions and history, and also to understand some of the hardships Jews face.

Living in proximity to a prison, Rabbi Borenstein took upon himself the role of prison Rabbi, conducting visits to Jewish prisoners. Once, at the conclusion of a visit he returned to the prison office to collect his phone which is forbidden in-

and acceptance at Chabad. Many members of the community have become best friends through their contact at the centre, and the community members support each other.

Chabad of Durham is a very active centre, with Tiny Tots for babies, a Hebrew school, events for young adults, Shabbos and holiday minyanim, and programs for seniors. They are the sole resource for their community; they ensure everyone has matza for Pesach, and they organize a Chanuka pop-up shop where families can get what they need for the holidays.

“We want to make things

easier for people to live Jewish lives,” Rabbi Borenstein explains.

Regarding the challenges of living outside of the big city, Rabbi Borenstein doesn’t complain. Although he has to chauffeur his children a long distance to school every day, he says he is just grateful that there is a Jewish school within driving distance. He prioritizes his children’s social lives, happily shuttling them to any get-together with friends and classmates.

The Borensteins are excited about the next big step in their life’s work; opening a new Jewish Community Centre building

that will house everything from their pre-school to a mikvah. Rabbi Borenstein says that the most special aspect of his work as a Chabad emissary is undoubtedly “being able to work side by side with my wife as an equal partner.”

These five Chabad families living on the edge of Toronto share the goal of bolstering Jewish life in their communities both materially and spiritually. Their exuberant spirit and optimism about the future permeate everything they say and do, promising a flourishing future for Jews in diverse neighborhoods around the city.



The Borenstein Family

daily ‘school runs’ is just a part of their life.

Recently there has been an influx of young families to the area. These families are delighted to find an existing Jewish presence in the neighborhood, and some have even approached the Lezells before buying their homes to ask about the local Jewish life. This growing population of young families offers the promise of a continued thriving community in the years ahead.

Another well-established Chabad Centre on the outskirts of town is Chabad of Durham in Whitby, run by Rabbi Tzali and Rebbetin Chana Mala Borenstein. Serving their community since 2010, they describe their mission in clear simple terms: to fill whatever need they encounter to make Jewish life accessible for everyone.

In Whitby, there is nowhere to buy traditional Jewish objects like mezuzahs or tefillin, so the Borensteins realized they will have to make these items available to the local community, even though ‘running a Judaica store’ is not part of their mandate. Rabbi Borenstein has distributed hundreds of mezuzahs, and sometimes fields requests

side the institution, and he was startled to discover dozens of calls from a member of his community. Concerned that it was an emergency, he called them back immediately, and in conversation they pieced together the ‘crisis’.

“My friend had called my house to speak to me,” Rabbi Borenstein laughingly relates, “and my five year old son innocently told him that I can’t come to the phone because I am in prison. My poor friend thought I had been arrested, and he kept calling my cell phone and getting a message that the call can’t be completed. He was convinced I was in serious trouble!”

In thirteen years, a Chabad family accumulates stories. Once they invited three local families for a Shabbat meal. None of the families had ever met before, but in the course of conversation at the dinner table it emerged that they all had children in the same public school, and none of those children had known there were other Jewish students to befriend.

Because most of the people living in Whitby are completely unaffiliated and isolated from any other Jewish input, they respond instantly to the warmth

Since last November, kids from all around the Toronto area have put in hours of learning, both in school and out, to master knowledge about their Jewish heritage and the Torah as part of the JewQ International Torah Championship.

Developed by CKids, Chabad’s Children’s Network, the JewQ competition is designed to encourage children to learn about their Jewish heritage through an engaging curriculum, exciting incentives, and culminating in an international competition.

Competing against 3,500 Chabad Hebrew School children around the world all vying for a chance to claim the international “Ultimate JewQ Champion” title, the students in the participating schools in Toronto have been pushing their limits on what they thought was possible.

On February 5, finalists from each school gathered together with family and friends and represented their school at the JewQ Toronto Regional Championship, hosted at the Chabad Israeli Center. Charged with verifying and deciding questionable answers were Rebbetzin Esty Grossbaum, Rebbetzin Rochel Landa, and the Honourable Justice Sheila Ray. With all contestants hav-



The judges: (R to L) Rebbetzin Esty Grossbaum, Rebbetzin Rochel Landa, and the Honourable Justice Sheila Ray

ing studied long and hard to be on stage, it was no easy feat. Children faced off with one another in a game show style event while answering rapid-fire questions. “How many minutes before sunset are the Shabbat Candles lit? What are the seven levels of giving charity? And “name the 12 Tribes” were some of the questions presented to the kids.

The highlight of the event was the JewQ Award Ceremony, where each student was rewarded for their hard work and dedication to their Jewish learning by receiving a certificate based on their test scores.

The celebration concluded by announcing the JewQ

Elite Champions. The representatives of each school that would continue on to represent their respective school at the JewQ International Championship in Stamford, CT on March 26th.

Participating Chabad Hebrew Schools from Toronto

- Chai Hebrew School
- JRCC Hebrew School
- Miriam Robbins Chabad
- Hebrew School of Mississauga
- Chabad Lubavitch Niagara
- Chabad Lubavitch of Aurora
- Chabad Romano Centre
- Uptown Chabad Lubavitch
- Chabad on the Avenue

To learn more about JewQ, visit ckids.org/jewq



From Ghana to Iceland, 3,000 Jewish Teens Revel in New York

By Moshe New
Californian Lev Yakov Voskoboynik says he found his Jewish identity through CTeen, as he and more than 3,000 teens and chaperones from as far as Ghana and Iceland gathered in New York for the 15th and largest-ever CTeen Shabbaton to date.

Voskoboynik started his journey to Jewish observance as a 14-year-old at the CTeen Xtreme camp, a travel camp geared for high school students. His parents, worried about his lack of Jewish interest, enrolled him in the camp to try to spark some feelings for Judaism. Fast-forward a decade, and after graduating high school, attending yeshivahs on the East Coast and receiving rabbinical ordination, Voskoboynik now runs a CTeen chapter with his wife, Talia, as part of Chabad of the River-towns in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. This year's Shabbaton is his fourth weekend as a chaperone and his first as a featured speaker on Sunday morning.

"Those two weeks in summer camp were life-changing for me; they opened my eyes to the beauty of Yiddishkeit," he says. "When I came home, I was so inspired

life, and conveying the message that standing tall in the face of challenges gives them the best opportunity to overcome them and come out the other end stronger and happier.

Shabbat was spent with local hosts and as part of group programs, and culminated with the iconic Havdalah ceremony in Times Square on Saturday night.

'Times Square Takeover'
The night started with the NYPD organizing two special subway trains for attendees departing from the Kingston Avenue station in Crown Heights with much singing and dancing in anticipation for the festivities ahead. The thousands of teens and chaperones filled Times Square, where their excited faces were broadcast on the many screens around Times Square, completing the "take-over."

The teens were welcomed by representatives from six continents, and singer Benny Friedman got proceedings underway with the Havdalah ceremony, where he was joined by the thousands in attendance in his rousing rendition of the prayer. He then began the first of many musical sets, stirring



Thousands of Jewish teenagers from around the world at the CTeen Shabbaton gathered in Times Square on Saturday night, Feb. 25, 2023.



CTeen chapter of Chabad Hebrew Community Centre in Thornhill at the 15th annual Shabbaton

that I started keeping some of the mitzvahs I had learned about in camp."

An avid tennis player and popular figure in high school, Voskoboynik says he slowly started to understand what Judaism meant to him through his involvement with Rabbi Eli Rivkin, co-director of Chabad of Northridge, Calif., who signed him up to attend the CTeen Shabbaton in New York.

"What got me hooked was the energy and excitement," he says. "I had friends back home in California, I was a successful athlete and I thought I had it all, but there was a realness that was missing. When I went to the Shabbaton, I realized just how shallow what I had really was, and I made a commitment to increasing my Jewish observance."

70 New Chapters Represented at Record Turnout.
The record turnout of more than 3,000 at this year's Shabbaton carried added significance as Jewish communities worldwide celebrate the Year of Hakhel, marked by Jewish gatherings focused on unity, Torah learning and practice. The ever-expanding CTeen network added 70 chapters to its ranks this year, and the growth was felt as participants spent their time in Crown Heights making new friends and reconnecting with old ones. In addition to spiritual guidance, rabbis could be seen on Friday morning donning conspicuous tour-guide hats as they traded in their fedoras and led the teens into the subway and out around town for entertaining and educational activities.

The theme of this year's conference was "Meant2B," which emphasized the importance of staying present and mindful in the often tumultuous life of a teen. The weekend focused on teaching the teens about "Divine Providence," G-d's ever-present role in

the crowd into joyful dance where the energy was palpable as teens bopped up and down in time with his songs.

Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, vice chairman of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch—the educational arm of Chabad-Lubavitch—was welcomed to the stage, where he spoke of the theme of "Meant2B" and announced the affixing of a mezuzah in Times Square, which was installed to much applause.

In an innovative twist, T-shirts were then thrown into the crowd with one of them containing the "jackpot"—an all-expense-paid CTeen summer experience for one lucky recipient. A special music video presentation was then aired on one of the big screens where the summer program was announced.

"This is the most fun I've had all year!" one teen from Woodcliff Lake, N.J., shouted over the sound of the crowd, holding tight to a friend he had recruited to come along with him this year.

Rabbi Tzvi Dubrawsky of Chabad of Dallas, who brought a group of 20 teens, said, "I'm in awe of the organizers how they could have thought of absolutely everything."

The event closed with more singing and dancing before the boys took to the subway and the girls took buses back to Crown Heights for a melaveh malkah banquet.

A Year Closes, and the Countdown to Next Year Begins
On Sunday morning, many attendees visited the Ohel in Queens, N.Y.—the resting place of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of righteous memory—before the weekend closed with a banquet lunch at Carneseca arena in Queens.

Rabbi Avrohom Rapoport, rabbi at Chabad at the Shore who is known affectionately as "the

TikTok Rabbi," was master of ceremonies and started the banquet with an interactive game of "Create Your Own Adventure Lab," where participants were able to choose the course of the journey the characters on the main screen took.

CTeen participant Rosie Grossbaum from Morristown, N.J., who has Cystic fibrosis, a disease that impacts her lungs and immune system, spoke of the challenges and empowerment of her condition. "When I was younger, I thought I would live forever," she began her speech. "When I got older, I realized my condition was a lot more serious than I thought it was."

"Yet I wouldn't want it any

other way. This is how G-d made me. This is how G-d wants me to be. Everything that happens to us is G-d's plan," she said, echoing the theme of "Meant2B" ... that everything happens for a reason.

Joey from New York's Upper West Side spoke of finding G-d after losing his mother at a young age. "You know that feeling when you love someone so much you say they're your entire world ... well, my mom was my entire world." He then recited a poem he wrote about finding G-d in his life.

Female leader of the year Hannah Belinkiy spoke of growing up in a town with a small Jewish community and the pride she has in her heritage, religion and culture. Male leader of the year Moshe

Rembaum from Panama spoke of the award being for all, and how all the young people gathered there were meant to be leaders.

Shoshana Zaretsky of Portland, Ore., then shared the story of her founding of "Teens Against Antisemitism," and experiencing purpose and pride in her Judaism. "Whatever darkness we find ourselves in, it's important to remind ourselves it is part of our journey, and G-d is there to make sure you're never alone."

Rapper/musician Nissim Black rounded out the event with an electric performance of some of his greatest hits, with teens gathering around the stage to dance along, capping off a weekend of fun, inspiration and friendship.

Largest Ever Pegisha Shabbaton Brings University Students to Crown Heights



A palpable energy of excitement filled the streets of Crown Heights this November 4th, as throngs of university students arrived in town for Chabad on Campus International's annual Pegisha Shabbaton. The students were treated to an unforgettable weekend of unique experiences that only the Crown Heights neighborhood, home to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, obm could offer.

Despite organizers' planning for many extra participants compared to last year's event, regis-

so as to accommodate even more people—and we absolutely plan on doing so," said Rabbi Yossy Gordon, CEO of Chabad on Campus International.

This year's programming included a musical prelude to Shabbos by the sought-after Chasidic band 8th Day, lectures, discussions, and farbrengens (inspirational Chasidic gatherings) throughout Shabbos, warm welcomes into the homes of hundreds of families in the Crown Heights community who hosted the participants, and the highly anticipated Havdalah concert

by the Global Head of Culture at TikTok and author of What Would You Do If You Weren't Afraid, Michal Oshman. Students were also given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences during the Shabbaton with a visit to the Ohel, the resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"The energy and pride I got to experience this weekend is something that will always stick with me. From the lessons we learned, to standing on a chair singing my heart out at Shabbos lunch, to going to the Ohel, this trip is unforgettable and something I hope every Jew on campus will experience," said Katie Penn of Illinois State University, where Rabbi Chaim and Rochel Telsner operate the Chabad on Campus.

"Pegisha was an incredible experience," said Julia Freedman of ISU. "I had the opportunity to learn about myself and my Jewish identity, ask questions, and so much more. I feel so inspired and couldn't have imagined a more amazing weekend." "Meeting other students from as far as Russia was incredible said Lisa from Waterloo, Ontario. The Chabad of campus programs from Ont. brought a number record of students who experienced an enjoyable and meaningful shabbaton."

"This year we had a number record of students from Ontario universities", said Mrs. Nechama Silberberg, from London Ontario.



tration filled quickly and broke records. Over 1,200 students, almost 200 Chabad emissaries, and 65 additional chaperones came for this year's Pegisha. "In future years, we're going to be creative

following Shabbos, with another performance by 8th Day as well as the stars of the Miami Boys Choir, who recently rose to social media fame. The weekend's inspiring closing program was led



Israeli Terror Victim Teens Gifted Tefillin and Shabbat Candlesticks on Canadian Trip

A Montreal community member surprised a group of teenage terror victims from Israel, by offering to donate a pair of tefillin or Shabbat candlesticks for every youngster.

The teens came to Canada to participate in IVOW, Israeli Victims of War, a unique trip that brings Israeli teens—either wounded in a terror attack or closely related to someone who has been—to Montreal for a month each summer. “The teens represent a real cross-section of Israel,” says Richard Dermer, who directs the thirty-year-old program. “Some are religious; some are not, some are Ashkenazi, some are Sephardi—terror doesn’t discriminate.”

The teens spent a week together touring Canada. On their last Shabbat before flying back to Israel, the IVOW teens visited Chabad’s Montreal Torah Center, where several of the organization’s volunteer staff are members, for Shabbat services and a unique program honoring Israeli victims of terror.

After the Torah reading, Abie Moses shared his story. In 1987 his pregnant wife Ofra and five-year-old son Tal were murdered by a Palestinian terrorist. Today, Moses is the national chairman of the Organization for Victims of Terrorism in Israel.

Also on hand to share his story was Obie Ben-Chaim, a former Israeli soldier severely wounded in his head while serving in the first Lebanon War. In solidarity with the teens and the sorrow they’ve experienced, the Israeli Consul General in Montreal, Paul Hirschson, also spoke with the group. “Their remarks gave the community a strong sense for who these kids are and the grief they and their families have been through,” Dermer says.

But after the speeches, the program went off script. Community member Jeremy Levy quietly told a rabbi that he and his wife wanted to donate a pair of tefillin for every boy on the trip, and Shabbat candlesticks for every girl, provided they commit to using them regularly.

When the rabbi relayed his offer to the teens, the vast majority raised their hands.

But getting the promised tefillin and candlesticks to the teens before their return flight to Israel on Wednesday morning would prove no easy feat. To complicate matters, the teens were leaving for Toronto im-



Rabbi Moshe New

mediately after Shabbat for their trip’s finale.

Rabbi Moshe New of Chabad Montreal Torah Centre and his staff shifted into high gear. They tracked down the appropriate number of tefillin in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and FedEx expedited the package to Toronto. But the box ran into trouble at customs. By the time Rabbi New landed in Toronto on Tuesday afternoon to deliver them, he had to hail a taxi and track down the package at a massive FedEx warehouse outside Toronto. With the teens leaving in hours, he rushed to their hotel, tefillin in hand.

Fresh off a long day of roller-coasters at Canada’s Wonderland amusement park, the group of nearly one hundred Israeli teens arrived at the conference room of their Toronto hotel, where Rabbi New waited with their new sets of tefillin and Shabbat candlesticks. “We had just a forty-five-minute window,” Rabbi New says.

Rabbi New helped teen after teen wrap their new tefillin. “It was an incredibly emotional moment,” he says. Witnessing the scene, Obie Ben-Chaim remarked he regretted not asking for a pair of tefillin. “It turned out we had an extra pair for him!” Rabbi New says.

“Our generation thirsts for real Jewish connection; we just have to respond,” Rabbi New reflected. “The teens were ready to take on another mitzvah.



More than 100 Jewish military service members and their families attended the 16th Annual Military Conference and Shabbaton hosted by Chabad’s Aleph Institute in Bal Harbour, Florida. This year’s symposium, held from February 22-26, 2023, explored elements of professional and communal relationships within military ministry and provided the opportunity for professional development, inspiration, and camaraderie.

Clerical participants included over two dozen chaplains endorsed by the Aleph Institute, the Chiefs of Chaplains of the Army, Navy and Air Force, the United States Central Command

(CENTCOM) chaplain, and international military chaplains representing Israel, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands. Dozens of non-clerical soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen attended as well, creating the synergy needed to provide the most valuable information and training from various vantages.

Barry Austreicher is a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Due to high Operational tempo at his unit, he was unable to attend the Aleph Symposium—until this year. “It was amazing to be surrounded by so many other Jewish soldiers who are in similar positions to me,” says Austreicher. “As far as I’m aware, there are few observant Jews in the whole Canadi-



Captain Barry Austreicher a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force (left) and Captain Noteh Glogauer a Royal Canadian Air Force Chaplain (right) at Aleph’s Military Symposium

an military, so this experience was very special to me.”

The symposium fired up on Wednesday evening with a casual-dress outdoor barbecue, where guests were able to mingle and connect without the barriers of ranks and uniform. On Thursday morning, after prayers and breakfast, participants were welcomed by Aleph’s founder, Rabbi Sholom Lipskar; Executive Director and Rabbi Aaron Lipskar; Chaplain Endorser Rabbi Sanford Dresin (CH COL, USA Ret); and Chaplain, Major Rabbi Elie Estrin, Aleph’s Military Personnel Liaison.

“Many Jews in the military do not have the opportunity to interact with a broader community while serving on isolated bases,” says Rabbi Estrin. “The goal of this weekend was to provide each participant with the unique opportunity to explore the challenges and triumphs of military life alongside fellow Jews in uniform. Our intent is that each participant is returning to their home station feeling spiritually, emotionally, and professionally rejuvenated.”

The first day of the conference addressed relevant topics such as presenting the concept of kosher to government entities, led by Rabbi Eli Eleff of the OU, and the impor-



Captain Noteh Glogauer, serving in the Canadian Armed Forces

tance of relationships in counseling victims of PTSD and traumatic brain injury, by renowned expert COL Dr. Jeff Yarvis. Chaplains and Jewish lay leaders from all branches and ranks received mentorship from senior officers and discussed best practices for military life, particularly regarding Jewish observance.

“There are only three Jewish chaplains on active duty in the entire Canadian military,” says Captain Noteh Glogauer, a Lubavitch Royal Canadian Air Force Chaplain serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. “Needless to say, it’s challenging. I reached out to Aleph a few years ago and

some of those virtual relationships as well as form new connections.”

A highlight for many was the presentation by the IDF Chief Rabbinate, including Brigadier General Rabbi Eyal Karim, Chief Rabbi of the IDF, and Lt Col Rabbi Yedidya Atlas, Chief of IDF Rabbinate Special Projects.

Thursday evening’s dinner was capped off with a fascinating lecture on recent legal cases dealing with religious freedom, given by Mr. Eric Baxter, Esq., Vice President and Senior Counsel of The Becket Fund.

“Spending five days with this diverse coalition of Jewish men and women was a profound reminder of the importance of Aleph’s mission,” says Rabbi Aaron Lipskar. “It bolstered our ongoing commitment to caring for the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of those in service, so that they are fully equipped to fulfill the highest demands of duty.”

Uplifting prayer services were followed by a gourmet meal on Friday night and Shabbat day. Over the traditional Shabbat foods such as wine and challah, guests were privileged to hear from an array of inspiring and motivational speakers, including Dr. Alexander Kott, Chief Scientist of the US Army Research Labs, CH (COL) Menachem Sebbag, the Chief Jewish Chaplain of the Netherlands Armed Forces, and Rear Admiral Melissa Bert, Chief Counsel of the United States Coast Guard.

In the penultimate session, guests had the opportunity to share insights they gained over the weekend and strategies to implement them. “The learning, the speakers, and the camaraderie—everything came together beautifully and really blew me away,” says Ch Maj Dan Millner, TX ANG. “It was really great to meet people I’d previously only spoken to on the phone or texted. To actually come and see them in person was truly a wonderful experience.”



More than 100 Jewish service members and their families attended the 16th Annual Military Conference and Shabbaton hosted by the Aleph Institute in Bal Harbour, Florida

Chabad's Women Emissaries Now The World's Largest Cohort of Gen Z Jewish Leaders

As the annual International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Women Emissaries, or Kinus Hashluchot, kicked off in New York, observers noticed the youthful energy of the participants. In fact, 404 of the 5,735 female Chabad leaders are Gen Z—the “digital native” generation born after 1997. These women, in their early 20s, lead and build communities, direct Jewish day camps and schools, mentor college students and run teen programming, all while juggling the responsibilities of mothering growing families and being the backbone of their community.

Kate Benediktsson was at the lowest point of her life when she encountered one of these young leaders. At the age of 40, she had just lost her husband and “went into a tailspin.” Seeing the state she was in, a friend connected her with the new Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries in town: Mirel Mintz and her husband, Rabbi Levi Mintz, co-directors of Chabad of Tiburon, an affluent Northern California town with a median age of almost 50. Mirel, 21, and her husband went straight to Benediktsson’s home in the next-door town of Belvedere.



Although she's still in her-20s, Mirel Mintz is having a big impact on Jewish people of all ages as co-director of Chabad of Tiburon, an affluent Northern California town. She is among the more than 400 Chabad women leaders worldwide who are Gen Z—the “digital native” generation born after 1997.

“Mirel walked up to me and gave me a hug that I can only describe as forcing the life force of G-d into me,” Benediktsson says of the moment they met. “It was one of the most powerful experiences of my life. We sat down together, and I dove into it. I saw they were young, but I had a deeper conversation with them than I had with any rabbi or rebbetzin before.”

Benediktsson was baring her heart to a woman half her age—just older than her own 18-year-old son—but she says “their age wasn’t present in that space. What was present was help, humanity and spiritual guidance.” Then, 22 days after her husband’s passing, she lost her daughter as well. “Mirel came to my house every day for two months,” she says. “She was a steady positive.” Now, she adds, the rabbi studies with her son, teaching him about his Jewish faith.

How do such young women become leaders and role models in their communities, confidants and comforters to people old enough to be their parents or grandparents? While the median age of U.S. based rabbis is 56, according to a Faith Communities Today survey, Chabad rabbinic couples skew much younger, with close to 600 Gen Z men and women joining the ranks in the last three years.

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, keenly understood the energy and potential of American youth to be leaders and builders. “American youth is like unsown land waiting to be worked,” the Rebbe told an interviewer in 1950. “The youth can be compared to a blank piece of paper.”

The Rebbe, continued the interviewer, Asher Penn, “explained that the 20th century American Jewish soul is ripe and open to Judaism in an unprecedented way. He showed that America filled all the requirements for becoming a Jewish spiritual haven, and thought it possible for American born Jews to be the next spiritual leaders and scholars for world Jewry.”

“They walk through the world with a gravity different from people my son’s age,” Benediktsson says of the young Chabad emissaries she connected with. “They occupy a space in the world that’s more solid. They have a quality of the innocence of the youth; they aren’t jaded. Hearing someone with such hope, faith and youth being able to hold my suffering—that juxtaposition is frankly so healing. They aren’t flippant or cavalier; the wisdom they have is so pure.”

“Truth,” says Benediktsson, “doesn’t have an age.”

Young Emissaries ‘Give Hope for the Future’

“It is a remarkable number of young people picking up the Rebbe’s call to serve communities all over the world,” explains Ron Wolfson. Wolfson, Fingerhut Professor of Education at American Jewish University in Los Angeles and author of *Relational Judaism and Creating Sacred Communities*, explains that Jewish communities of all kinds share one concern: Will they go on into the future?

This cohort of young women—born in the 28 years since the Rebbe’s passing in 1994—represent one half of the two-person team that forms a Chabad emissary couple. These young couples are poised to create a sea change of Jewish leadership for members of the Jewish community of all backgrounds and ages. Collectively they form the largest group of Gen Z spiritual leaders in the worldwide Jewish community.

“The baby boomers aren’t getting younger. The No. 1 concern is that Judaism thrives into the next generation,” says Wolfson.

Seeing young leadership gives hope for the future, he continues, adding that it’s the values that Chabad women and men live by and demonstrate that ensure their success.

“Chabad lives a complete Jewish life while in regular society,” he says. “One of the hallmarks of Chabad’s approach is to bring a traditional message and lifestyle to a population that doesn’t know so much about it. They have an advantage, especially with reaching the young generation; they have the authenticity that Gen Z is looking for.”

While young spiritual leadership can be found across the Jewish spectrum, Wolfson says, by far, the largest number of young Jewish communal leaders today come from “the Chabad system where you have young couples willing to go out there, ‘put down the flag,’ and build

communities.... There are many more examples of that work by Chabad than in other movements.”

Oftentimes, the pioneering spirit goes back to the communities and families where these young women were raised. Chaya Citron, 24, who co-directs Chabad on Campus SW Portland, Ore., and is also the director of a Chabad preschool in Portland where she’s the youngest staff member, says she was raised “with the mindset of shlichut” in her hometown Chabad community of Chicago.

From a young age, “we are always involved in outreach, volunteering, running camps; we are educated this way,” she says.

Chaya Sasonkin, 25, co-director of Chabad of Casa Grande, an Arizona town halfway between Phoenix and Tucson, says she and her peers could never come up with this idea—setting up a new community without any Jewish infrastructure and no top-down financial backing—on their own. “It’s really the Rebbe who empowered us to do this. The Rebbe gave us a passion to grow Jewish life.”

Sasonkin and her husband, Rabbi Moshe Sasonkin, moved to Casa Grande from Brooklyn two years ago. She grew up in the Tucson area, where her parents direct Chabad on River; he is from Long Island, where his parents also serve as Chabad emissaries. They looked into many places before setting their eyes on the small town they often drove past. “We realized it had no Jewish infrastructure, and visiting there we met Jews who commuted to Phoenix or Chandler for Jewish life,” she says.

Now, Chabad of Casa Grande has weekly Torah classes for men and women, regular Shabbat services, holiday services, an active Jewish Women’s Circle and Jewish education for children. They serve the nearby towns of Eloy and Arizona City as well, and her husband regu-



Chaya Sasonkin, 25, lower left, hosts a group for women at Chabad of Casa Grande, an Arizona town halfway between Phoenix and Tucson.

larly visits the incarcerated in area prisons as well.

“The Rebbe,” Wolfson believes, “would be smiling.”

‘They Lead This Community Together’

David Garnice, 70, and his wife, Marcia, moved to Casa Grande a year ago from the Phoenix suburbs. His experience at Chabad has been “very different and very gratifying.” Different, he explains, because he feels the rabbi and rebbetzin care about him more than he’s experienced elsewhere. For example, when a family emergency meant they couldn’t make it to a Sukkot service, the rabbi walked to his home to bring the lulav and etrog to him. “That was really impressive,” says Garnice.

“A younger rebbetzin and rabbi are more active, more involved. They seem to be everywhere at the same time.” He says that the rabbi’s wife isn’t just a side role, “she is an equal. They lead this community together.”

In many cases, these young men and women aren’t just serving as assistant clergy at larger synagogues as their foray into the Jewish leadership world. Instead, they are creating new communities in places with no or limited Jewish infrastructure, bringing a Jewish presence to

college campuses and designing new communities for teens and young professionals. These positions aren’t stepping stones on the way to a more prestigious role but in the majority of cases a lifetime posting.

In Tiburon, Kate Benediktsson’s emotional connection with Mirel Mintz has evolved into a thirst for the Judaism she never had growing up in Alaska with a Jewish mother and Evangelical father. This connection will soon take the shape of a fully kosher kitchen in her home.

“After I met them, my life changed dramatically. I connected with fabulous Jewish women; I go to Shabbat at Chabad,” she says. “Now we have this group of people who get together for Shabbat and outside of it. My new friend Rachel is moving, and all of a sudden, we’re all helping her move in real time. This didn’t exist before.”

She describes the joy at this past year’s Chanukah celebration and menorah-lighting in the center of town: “So many people were there! There was an energy to it, a joy and soulfulness. I can still picture the dancing. The infusion of connection and life they’re bringing—it’s cool to see what will unfold.”



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Seders To Remember



Passover is perhaps the most well-known of Jewish holidays, and, historically, the Seder has been the most celebrated of Jewish holiday traditions. In large Jewish communities, Seder provisions are easily accessible, and many begin preparations long before the holiday. But for lone travelers and those who live far from centers of Jewish life, making the Seder can be a challenge.

So in a sixty-year Chabad tradition, rabbinical students travel the world, bringing the entire Seder to Jews who live far from the madding crowds. Here are some glimpses of their experiences.

Moscow, Russia
Pickpocket at the Prison Seder

Shaye Deitsch, Shaarei Tzedek Social Center & Marina Roscha Synagogue

Over a decade ago I started hosting a Seder in the Butyrka Prison in Moscow. It's an old prison. Under the Soviet regime, it housed political prisoners, including Chabad Chasidim.

When I first arranged the Seder, the prison's administrators gave me clear guidelines: everything about the traditional Seder would be allowed except alcohol. I alone was permitted to drink wine. So I brought one small bottle of wine for myself and grape juice for everyone else.

Everything went wonderfully. I poured myself the first cup and drank it, and then I poured the second cup. But when I drank the second cup, instead of wine, there was juice in my cup.

It didn't take me long to figure out what had happened. The man

sitting next to me was an experienced pickpocket and had helped himself to my cup of wine. Not wanting to make a fuss, I stealthily poured my wine bottle into a grape juice bottle, and filled the wine bottle with juice.

I got to drink the last two cups of wine undisturbed.

Austin, Texas
Dance Pause
Mendy Levertov, Chabad Young Professionals



Mendy Levertov

My parents made a public Seder each year for college students in Austin, Texas. By the time I was eight years old, I knew to look forward to the dancing that always came at the end. But just as the fun was about to begin, a tall man walked in with a cowboy hat and a guitar case. He'd just finished playing a gig at a local bar. "Mendy," my father said, "Would you like to go through the Seder with him?" I didn't want to miss the dancing, but I decided to go for it.

I gave the man some wine and a Seder plate with a tray of matzah.

Then I guided him through the entire Seder. I convinced him to drink all four cups and eat the minimum matzah and maror required. By the time I let him go, the crowd was gone, and the dancing was long over.

Years later, I got regards from a friend. He told me that he'd met an Orthodox-looking guy in Israel. They got to talking, and when the man learned that my friend was from Austin, he laughed. Recalling the time he rocked into a Seder just as it was ending, the man said, "This earnest little kid at Chabad inspired me, walking me through the entire Seder."

Seder In The Bar
Rabbi Berel Levertov, Chabad, Santa Fe, New Mexico

We had just completed an inspired community Passover Seder. Most of the 135 guests who enjoyed the meaningful Seder had left, and the last few people were lingering and schmoozing. It was past midnight but we couldn't just go to bed. After reading about the fifteen steps of freedom, we were awake and energized.

Something in the back of my mind told me that I wasn't done for the night. I had a nagging feeling that there were still more Jews in Santa Fe who had not participated in a Seder at all. It was possible that there were Jews in the downtown Plaza area, not far from our Chabad center, who hadn't fulfilled the basic mitzvah of eating matzah. In fact, it occurred to me that most were not even aware that it was Passover.

I enlisted two of the lingering schmoozers. Judah from Brooklyn and Liv the violinist. We grabbed a box of matzah and a Haggadah and set out, walking towards the Plaza downtown area in search of Jews.

The main grounds of the Plaza yielded no results. The only place still open was a basement bar. I have walked past it many times, and never felt compelled to check it out. But who knows? Maybe there's a Jew waiting there, I thought. We descended the stairs and asked around, but there were no Jews at the bar on Passover night.

I was relieved. As we made our way back to the shul, we stopped at one more bar, which was getting ready to close for the night. Looking through the window, we saw two people. We stepped in, and asked the bartender and his friend if either of them were Jewish.

"I am half," said one. Which half?
"The better one. My mom's Jewish."
We were delighted. "That makes you 100 percent Jewish," I said. "You know, like Moses."
We started chatting. I learned



that his name was Aaron. "Like Moses's brother," I told him.

He didn't know what it was that made this night different from all other nights, and he most certainly had not partaken in a Seder.

I pointed to the box of matzah that we had brought with us. "This is special hand-baked shmurah matzah. Poor man's bread," I told him. "And we're going to have the most important part of the Seder right here, right now."

Curious to know more, Aaron followed our lead. He washed his hands, recited the blessings, and fulfilled the mitzvah of eating matzah on Passover.

I wondered what he thought about his first Passover experience. It felt meaningful to him, he said. He thanked us. And would we let him keep the Haggadah and the kippah, so that he could continue his Seder at home?

We did. Then we headed back to the Jewish Center to continue cleaning up and preparing for the morning services.

Seder in Tanzania
By Danny Denburg

We stood at the baggage carousel in Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and waited for our boxes to slide down the ramp. We waited and waited, and waited some more. People came and people went. Boxes and suitcases came and went, but not ours. We tried not to panic. How will we celebrate Pesach without our matzah and wine?

It was just days before Pesach, when Eli and I arrived in Dar es Salaam with suitcases of canned food, brochures, Judaica, and more than a dozen mezuzahs. We traveled from the US to help the Jews



living in and visiting Tanzania with Passover seders. Our trip was arranged by Rabbi Bentolila, the Chabad representative in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We shlepped all that we could, but the matzah, wine, and chickens were to arrive separately from Nairobi.

"If it's not on this flight, it'll come on the next. Or the next. Or the one after that," said the man behind the lapelled uniform. But timing was critical. We searched for an airport official who might have more information. Something in our boxes had sprung a leak (maybe a broken bottle of wine or an unsealed package of chicken), we were finally told. Whatever the source of the pink liquid dripping from our boxes, it was enough to warrant the customs officials to hold it back and investigate. Indeed, they promised, it will arrive on a later flight. We held our breath, and planned to come back later that evening.

We set up camp at the Nargila restaurant, a casual diner owned by an Israeli woman which has become a magnet for local and wandering Jews. That would be the site of our seder and our temporary Chabad House for the next few days. Tanzania has just about two

dozen Jews at most, we were told. It is known mostly as the gateway to the famed Mount Kilimanjaro and the acclaimed Serengeti reserve. Big on tourism. Not so big on Jews.

Late that evening we hurried back to the airport praying that our precious cargo would arrive. We joined a crowd of backpackers and businessmen, which once again began to thin out as the carousel was emptied. Panic began to creep back into our hearts. Time was running out.

Just then we saw a stream of pink liquid flowing down the carousel ramp, and we knew our wine and chickens were on their way.

Relieved, we broke out in a little Chasidic dance. This brought back some of the crowd. One couple stood watching with a look of astonishment, which we soon found out was mixed with relief. This Jewish couple had missed their flight back to Israel. With no way back to Israel before Pesach, they were horrified to be stuck in Dar es Salaam for Passover. With no wine, matzah, or family, how would they make a seder? The sight of two dancing Chabad rabbis, with our boxes of matzah and wine, set them at ease.

Armed with all we needed for a festive Pesach seder, we hurried back to the Nargila restaurant to begin the process of kashering their kitchen. Ida, the owner, brought along some of her friends to help with this arduous process. As we lit up our blowtorches, they lit up their hookas, and together we koshered the kitchen and talked late into the night.

Erev Pesach, as we set the tables for our grand seder, we sorted through the boxes of matzah in search of enough unbroken pieces to place under the seder plate. Many hours bouncing around airports and airplanes can break even the toughest, thickest, matzah.

Digging through our boxes and suitcases, we realized that we had forgotten to pack prayer books and prayer shawls. For tonight we were set, but prayers tomorrow would be another story for another day.

The two dozen Jews we expected swelled into sixty guests. It gave new resonance to the verses we read about how our ancestors back in Egypt multiplied so quickly. Here, two thousand miles south of Egypt, the Jews were multiplying just as fast.

We sang and we ate and we asked, "why is this night SO different from all other nights?"

The next morning we pulled our jet-lagged, tired, and spent bodies out of bed. Last night's uplifting seder gave us inspiration for what lay ahead — a shul without siddurim and tallesim.

We tuned into our repertoire of Niggunim. Soul stirring Chasidic melodies with no words, just ay ya yay's. Our congregants all joined in. No Hebrew knowledge required and no books necessary. You just need a soul and ay ya yay.

We concluded our services with Tanzania's very first Priestly Blessing—Birchat Kohanim. Passover seders are celebrated differently in Jewish communities, but Jews are blessed by the Kohanim with the very same words and the very same tune everywhere in the world. In Tanzania too.

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El Paso Independent School District Becomes First to Adopt ‘ARK’



Gavin Katz is a South African businessman, so what does he have in common with a high school student from El Paso, Texas? The answer revolves around a special little charity box that has made its way into American schools all the way from Johannesburg, South Africa.

Before setting out on long cross-country drives, Mr. Katz visits Rabbi David Masinter, director of Chabad of Johannesburg. There, Gavin picks up hundreds of yellow charity boxes shaped like boats — more specifically, arks. “I fill my car with arks,” he says, “and whoever I meet, whether a hitchhiker or a petrol attendant, I give them an ark and a little money.”

“Fill it up,” he tells them, “and pass it along to someone who needs it more than you.”

Why an ark? “It’s an acronym for Acts of Random Kindness,” Rabbi Masinter explains. He began manufacturing the yellow plastic vessels in August of 2014, hoping to promote routine charity and spark a wave of positivity. “The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s message to the world was to increase in acts of goodness and kindness,” he explains. “Charity is the best way I can think of to bring his message to life.”

Within a month of the launch of the ARK program, Johannesburg’s most prominent newspaper ran an editorial on the initiative. Within the year, Rabbi Masinter’s organization, Miracle Drive, had distributed nearly one hundred thousand ARKs. A smattering of publicity and celebrity endorsements helped, as did the tireless devotion of staff and volunteers, and the momentum kept building. Rabbi Masinter reckons 800,000 ARKs have been filled up and given to a needy person. “I have no idea how much money people have raised,” he says, “but that’s the point.” It was always about kindness, not fundraising.

The project has become a phenomenon in South Africa. Still, it wasn’t until one volunteer who worked on the project, Rabbi Moshe Hecht, opened a Chabad House in Hamden, Connecticut, that the little yellow charity boats began floating around the United States. Rabbi Hecht had started spreading the word to fellow Chabad emissaries across the United States when, in 2017, a Chabad rabbi in El Paso, Texas, decided he wanted to place a charity box in the hands of every public school student in his city.

“We’re trying to stop school shootings here,” Rabbi Levi Greenberg said. Across the table, several educators at the El Paso Independent School District slowly began nodding. They were developing a plan to give every school child in El Paso, Texas, an ARK. “It’s not about raising money. It’s about raising a generation of kind people,” he elaborated.

Each year, Rabbi Greenberg had watched the White House and all fifty states celebrate the devotion of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, to educa-

tion. Proclamations across the nation mark the anniversary of the Rebbe’s birth as Education Day USA. “The Rebbe placed huge significance on moral education,” Rabbi Greenberg says. “He taught us that education isn’t just preparation for a career. It’s about building moral character and teaching children to be kind and respectful of one another.”

“I got it into my head that we need to get a pushka (Yiddish for charity box) into every El Paso public school student’s hands,” he recalls. When Rabbi Hecht introduced him to ARK, Rabbi Greenberg knew it was just what he wanted. Now he just needed a foundation willing to back the project and provide the required resources. Rabbi Greenberg pitched the idea to a journalist. The journalist referred him to a lawyer — who loved it. The lawyer and his wife recommended Rabbi Greenberg to the El Paso Community Foundation, a prestigious foundation in town and the force behind numerous local educational initiatives.

“How can we educate children to be good people?” Rabbi Greenberg asked in his meeting with Eric Pearson, president of the El Paso Community Foundation. “Either you preach to them to be good, or you train them to do good.” He argued that the ARKs could train children to act kind, think kind, and become future philanthropists. “If you give a large sum to charity once, it’s great for the recipient,” Rabbi Greenberg said, “but if you give a small sum consistently, you become a giver.” Enthused with the idea’s potential, Mr. Pearson green-lit a pilot project.

In 2019, an El Paso private school called a school assembly. A presentation introduced routine charity to the children, and every student, kindergarten through high school, received a

little yellow ARK. A month later, Community Foundation volunteers were back with buckets, and everyone watched as each child deposited a few coins, bills, and sometimes a note of a kind deed. They voted to donate the funds to a local food bank, and the foundation wrote out the check — a whopping \$1,200.

At the Community Foundation, the highlight came as an email. A high school student who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border from Juarez, Mexico each day thanked his principal for running the program. “I never noticed the condition of the poor people in Juarez before,” he wrote, “but giving charity made me more sensitive to the plight of those less fortunate than myself.” They celebrated the pilot program as a success, and Rabbi Greenberg reached out to Manuel Castruita, Director of Counseling & Advising for the El Paso Independent School District.

“We were rolling out a curriculum to build core social-emotional learning competencies,”



Mr. Castruita remembers. He immediately saw the educational potential of the ARKs. “It gives children social awareness,” he says, “it teaches them there are others who have needs, and you can help them. Regardless of your age, or socioeconomic status, there is something you can do.” The idea came at a perfect time because the district was looking for activities to supplement its social-emo-



tional learning curriculum. “It was a perfect juncture to manifest some goodness for students,” Manuel says.

The school district ironed out the details and set the program to launch in the spring of 2020. But COVID put everything on hold. It would be over a year before the school district called Rabbi Greenberg to say they were finally going ahead with ARK. But first, the El Paso Independent School District gave each employee an ARK.

Mr. Castruita chokes up, remembering the day everyone brought their ARKs into the office and combined the change. “At first, it didn’t seem like a lot, but everyone brought in their ARKs,

entire district, and similar large-scale ARK programs are set to go ahead this year in Atlanta, Georgia; Waukesha, Wisconsin; and St. Louis, Missouri.

“A charity box creates an opportunity for kindness,” Rabbi Greenberg says. “Every time a person puts in a coin, they change just a little bit and become just a little kinder.”

In Connecticut, Rabbi Hecht launched the ARK program beyond the schools. By now, neatly designed boxes of ARKs are stationed in bank lobbies and grocery stores, and local media has covered the new “Kindness Coalition” in town. Rabbi Hecht has seen the arks go viral twice on two different continents. “They’re a novel way to promote

and we could feel the momentum building,” he says. “It caused us to reflect because no matter how small our contribution, when we do something positive collectively, there’s mass-energy. People were very touched by that; it was a moment of joy.” When ARK launched in five schools, that moment of joy was replicated for nearly four thousand students. This coming school year, ARK will finally launch across the

charity,” Rabbi Hecht says, “and they allow everyone to put any differences aside and make a positive impact together.”

Back in Johannesburg, where it all began, Rabbi Masinter has set up two massive public art pieces to spread ARK’s message, and is putting up a third. The colorful sculptures sum up the worldwide campaign’s message perfectly in just two words: Be Kind.

Thousands of Jewish Women Leaders Gather for Annual Group Photo in New York

Combining a record turnout and unseasonably warm weather, thousands of Jewish leaders attending the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Women Emissaries posed for their first outdoor group photo in

many years on Friday, Feb. 10, in front of Chabad-Lubavitch World Headquarters, at 770 Eastern Parkway, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The annual event, which is the largest Jewish woman’s con-

ference in the world., has added significance this year as Jewish communities worldwide marked the year of Hakhel, the Jewish year of gathering

The conference culminated in a gala banquet on Sunday eve-

ning, Feb. 12, when emissaries and their local supporters joined for an evening of recognition and appreciation—best known for the roll call of attendees from all 50 states and more than 100 countries.



Dear Rebby

By Rabbi Aron Moss



What if the Problem is You?

What If the Problem is You?

At my seder no one understands Hebrew, so we read the Haggadah in English. My cousin who is fluent in Hebrew says that we miss much of the richness and depth of the story by reading it in translation. Apparently there are deeper lessons that can only be found in the Hebrew. Can you give an example?

Answer

In every English version of the Haggadah that I have seen, there is one word that is always translated incorrectly.

When listing the Ten Plagues that smote the Egyptians, the second plague is called in Hebrew Tzefardeya. This is always translated as Frogs. But the original Hebrew is in the singular. The translation should be Frog.

Now indeed, it is a little awkward to translate it literally, the Plague of a Frog. One frog hopping around does not seem like much of a plague. And to be fair, in many languages the singular form can denote a group, so perhaps Frog can mean Frogs. But there must be a reason why the Haggadah uses the word frog. Lice is in plural, so why is frog singular?

The talmudic tradition explains that actually, the plague of frogs started with one single frog. A large frog emerged from the Nile River. The Egyptians saw it, and knowing that Moses had warned them there would be a plague of frogs, attacked the giant frog with sticks. As they struck the frog, it started spewing hundreds and thousands of little frogs, which quickly spread over the entire land. The more they hit, the more frogs appeared.

So indeed the plague started with a singular frog. It was the Egyptian reaction that caused frogs plural.

Those foolish Egyptians were attacking the frog, but ignoring its root cause. The plagues were only coming because the Egyptians refused to let the Israelites go free. But rather than taking a hard look at themselves and changing their cruel behaviour, the Egyptians looked at this big frog and tried to kill it. Which only led to more frogs.

There is a deep message behind this rather odd episode. Often we do the same silly thing as those Egyptians did. Rather than deal with our problems, we try to take away the consequences. We attack the symptoms but not the cause, the outside manifestation of an issue rather than our own part in it. And things only get worse.

We get upset at our spouse for pointing out our flaws, rather than facing the flaws themselves.

We lose patience with our kids who are misbehaving, while the main reason for their playing up is because we don't have patience to really listen to them in the first place.

We throw sharp objects at our computer for taking too long to warm up just when we need to view an important document for a meeting starting in two minutes. And then for some reason the computer doesn't work at all.

We hit these frogs, and all we get is more frogs.

The Haggadah is full of such powerful lessons. It is worth studying it in detail, and there are many excellent English translations with commentaries that bring out the deeper meanings. The above is just an example of how even one word in the Haggadah can teach us volumes. Don't look at the frog. Look at yourself.

Live Free or... Dayenu

Our favourite song of the Seder is Dayenu. Everyone joins in and it wakes people up. But I have always wondered what the point of it is. We are saying that had G-d only taken us out of Egypt, without judging the Egyptians, it would have been enough for us. And so on and so on, each thing G-d did for us would have been enough. What are we trying to say? It sounds like one of those annoying people who after you give them a gift they say, "You shouldn't have, I really don't need anything special." Why would we tell G-d we don't need His miracles?

Answer

The Seder is not just about celebrating the exodus from slavery three thousand years ago.

The Seder is about going out of your own personal slavery today.

Back then, Egypt was the blockage to freedom. Today other things prevent us from being truly free.

You have an amazing soul with incredible gifts to bring to the world. Whatever good you have done, you have more to do.

But something is tying you down, holding you back, blocking your path to fulfilment. Seder night is the time to contemplate what that blockage might be, and try to beat it. That is the Egypt that you need to leave on Pesach.

The obstacles to freedom can come in many forms. But there is one blockage to growth, one barrier to self-expression, one roadblock to success that is bigger than them all:

Thinking small.

We have so much power in our soul. We have so much we could be achieving. But a little voice inside us gets in the way. It is the naysayer, the killer of ambition, that lulls us into settling for what is, rather than striving for what could be. Stuck in old thought patterns and self-imposed definitions of ourselves, we say, "I am who I am and I shouldn't expect more from myself."

But G-d thinks bigger of us. There is so much more to our story, so many miracles waiting to happen for us, so much further we can go in our journey. It just

depends who is setting the agenda - us with our limited view of ourselves, or G-d with His infinite belief in us.

This is the deeper meaning of Dayenu. On Seder night, after recounting all the amazing wonders that G-d did for us when we left Egypt, we say Dayenu - if it would have been up to us, none of this would have happened. We would have been happy with leaving Egypt and that's it. We never would have made it to Mount Sinai, to the Promised Land.

Had we been writing the script, the exodus would have been little more than a population shift, a boring little non-event. We had a problem. We were slaves, and we just wanted out. Leaving Egypt would have been enough for us.

But G-d had a bigger vision for us. We were not just destined to be free, we were destined to be great. The exodus was just one step in a grand plan, to receive the Torah, reach the Holy Land and build the Temple. The Jewish people went from a forgotten slave nation to a formidable people that changed history. That wasn't our ambition, it was G-d's.

This is the message of Pesach. Don't listen to your Dayenu voice. Don't suffice with mediocrity. Don't be bound by your own limited imagination. Open yourself to the vision G-d has for you. Take another step in your soul's journey, and don't stop until you have built the Holy Temple.

Live Free or Dayenu.

Split Your Personality

Why did the Israelites have to pass through the Red Sea? On my map of the Middle East, the route from Egypt to Israel is directly through the desert. The sea is totally out of the way. G-d led them on a detour, trapping them between the sea and the chasing Egyptians, and then split the sea. Does G-d have no sense of direction?

Answer:

The Israelites passing through the Red Sea was not a geographical necessity, but a spiritual one. At the Red Sea, we were shown the power of the human soul.

The earth is comprised of oceans and continents, sea and dry land. The difference between the two is that on dry land, all is open and visible. The trees, animals, mountains and people that occupy it are all easily recognisable. The sea on the other hand is a big blue expanse of mystery. Though the sea is teeming with life, when you look at it you can identify nothing, all is hidden beneath the surface.

So it is with a person. Our personality has two layers: our sea, and our land. What we know of ourselves, our visible strengths, our tested talents and our known abilities, the elements of our character that we are aware of, these comprise the dry

land of our personality. But below the surface of our character lies a vast sea of latent talents, inner strengths and untapped abilities that we never knew we had. In the depth of our soul lies a reserve of dormant energy waiting to be discovered. This is our sea, and even we ourselves are unaware of what lies there.

How can we access this reservoir of potential? How can our sea become dry land? There is only one way. And we know it from the encounter at the Red Sea.

The Israelites had their back to the wall: Egyptians closing in on one side, a raging sea threatening on the other. They had only two options, despair or faith. Logic and reason demanded that they give in. There was no possible way out of their predicament. But faith demanded that they keep marching to the Promised Land. Sea or no sea, this is the path that G-d has led us, so we have to have faith and march on. And so they did.

It was at that moment, when hopelessness was countered by faith, that the impossible happened, and the sea opened up to become dry land. The most formidable obstacle dissolved into nothingness, without a struggle, just with faith. The people became empowered exactly when they acknowledged G-d as the only true power. By surrendering themselves to a higher force, they discovered the force within them. They split their own sea.

The Jewish people are no strangers to times of challenge. At the very birth of our nation, we needed to learn how to face these challenges. So G-d took us on a detour to the sea and opened it up for us. He was telling every Jew for all times:

Obstacles are not interruptions to the journey, they are the journey. Keep marching towards the Promised Land. Every challenge along the way will give you deeper insight and renewed power. Just have faith. It will split your sea.

Is Judgmentalism Bad?

I feel like the more religious someone is, the more judgmental they become. You people look down at anyone not as religious as you. This is so arrogant and condescending. Does the Torah condone judgmentalism?

Answer

It seems you think being judgmental is bad. That's a bit judgmental.

The truth is, you can't be a good person and completely non-judgmental. If you watch someone do evil and dismiss it as "each to their own", you have lost your moral compass. If you can't identify good as good, and you can't name evil as evil, then you have equated the two. And that, excuse the judgmentalism, is bad.

There is a way to be judg-

mental without being condescending. The Torah says we should indeed judge. But judge favourably. When we see someone doing wrong, name it as wrong. But judge the action, not the person. They are doing wrong, but they may not realise it, or not fully appreciate the gravity of their actions, or not have full control over their choices. It is still wrong, but the person is not necessarily bad.

If I see a parent publicly humiliating their child, I can judge the action without judging the person. Public humiliation is wrong. But I have no idea what brought this parent to behave this way. They could be having a bad day, or a weak moment, or they themselves were brought up that way and think it's okay.

I don't need to declare this parent guilty. They may be an exemplary carer at all other times. But I do need to judge the action as wrong. Otherwise I will excuse myself when I behave that way, and be indifferent to bad behaviour in others.

The same applies to Jewish observance. If I see someone discarding Judaism, I don't condemn them. I feel bad that they are depriving their own soul, and missing out on the beauty and spirituality Judaism has to offer. But it's probably not their fault. They may not have been Jewishly educated, or had bad experiences with Judaism. They either don't know what they are missing, or don't appreciate the relevance and power of Jewish practice. Or they may just be too distracted by the flashy lights of materialism to give attention to spiritual matters. That is sad. But they aren't bad.

I know my own struggles. I don't really know anyone else's. I can say an action is wrong. I can't say the person is bad. Am I arrogant and condescending? I'll let you be the judge.

Is the Mafia After You?

Why do Chassidic Jews wear long black coats and black hats? You look like a cross between a 17th century Polish nobleman and an Italian mafia boss. How is that appropriate for Jews, especially on a hot summer Shabbat?

Answer

I wear a black coat and hat. And I don't believe I have ever been mistaken for a mafioso or a Polish nobleman. I can't read people's minds. But I would imagine they'd look at me with fear if they thought I was a mobster. And perhaps they'd bow or curtsy if they thought I was from the aristocracy. I have not noticed people doing either.

But I have noticed looks of familiarity, coming from Jews who are proud to see a conspicuous member of the tribe. And I have often been greeted with "Shalom" from friendly non-Jews who admire the Jewish people.

Dear Rebby

By Rabbi Aron Moss



Of course I have also received other not-so-friendly greetings from those who have less admiration for Jews. But I have never been called a dirty Italian or filthy Pole. So it seems whether friend or foe, everyone gets it - I am a Jew. And that is the point.

Many factors may be considered when choosing what to wear. Some check the latest fashions to see what is in. Others check the latest weather to see what is comfortable. But that is making a choice based on the world outside. A chassidic Jew dresses to express what is inside. We dress to look Jewish. We wear our souls on our sleeves.

The message is unmistakable: to our enemies, you can't get rid of us. To our friends, the people of the Bible are still the people of the Bible. And to our fellow Jews, there's nothing to fear, be a proud and unapologetic Jew. My very presence is a loud testimony to all that Am Yisrael Chai - the Jewish people is alive and well.

I am not weather appropriate. My warmth comes not from the sun, but from the soul. I am not fashionable. What's in today is out tomorrow. The Jew is here to stay.

Do You Know What Israel Means?

Excuse my ignorance, but what does the word 'Israel' actually mean?

Answer

That's an important question. Names are significant. Your name is your essence, your true self, your mission. And the name of a nation describes its collective character. If we are called the Children of Israel, then that must define our destiny.

Which makes the meaning of the word Israel quite surprising. Israel literally means, "One who struggles with G-d."

The origin of the name Israel is a biblical verse. Referring to our forefather Jacob, the Torah states: "Your name is Israel, because you struggled with G-d and with man, and prevailed."

Indeed Jacob's life was a relentless series of struggles. He clashed with his brother. He was swindled by his father-in-law. He even wrestled with an angel (who was not his mother-in-law).

But he always came out on top. He won all his battles, and those who attacked him all ended up as his friends. He always prevailed. So Jacob, and the nation that came from him, are called Israel.

Which makes the name Israel even more surprising. If our name is all about prevailing in our struggles, why not call us "the one who prevails," rather than "the one who struggles"? Isn't the point that we win the battle? So why name us after the struggle, not the victory?

Here is the essence of Judaism. We do believe that goodness prevails in the end. We know that the story has a happy

ending. But the happy ending is not our focus. Our focus is the struggle to get there. Regardless of the result, the struggle itself is holy. If you are striving for goodness, even before you get there, you are in. If you are trying to be better, even if sometimes you fall, you are on the path. It's all about the struggle.

That's why the Torah doesn't speak about heaven. The Torah speaks about this life in this world. We believe in the afterlife. But we aren't preoccupied with it. We focus our energy on the effort to be a good person, the struggle to do the right thing, the battle against our adversaries, both within our own selves, and outside of us.

Some religions seek serenity. Some spiritual paths promise peace. Others offer a place in heaven. Judaism embraces the struggle of the here-and-now. The happy ending will come. But for now, we are here to grapple with G-d, debate with our fellow man, and struggle with ourselves, never accepting that the world can't change. Starting with me. That's Israel.

Stop Thief!

I had a young rabbi in my store trying to convince me to put up a mezuzah. We were broken into last week and he said the mezuzah will protect me from bad things. I think that's ridiculous. How can a scroll on my doorway stop robbers coming in? And those people who always touch and kiss the mezuzah look like they are doing black magic or something. I believe in G-d, but I don't believe in hocus-pocus mumbo-jumbo rituals.

Answer

Before addressing your question, I need to alert you to some thievery that I myself witnessed in your store. I didn't say anything at the time, because your staff didn't seem to care. But if you are concerned about being robbed, I think you need to know what is going on right under your nose.

There was a well-dressed guy in line before me, who came to the cashier with an expensive item. He was told the price loud and clear. But instead of paying like a normal person would, he performed an elaborate and weird ritual that made no sense whatsoever.

He took out his phone from his pocket, as if he was about to make a call. But no. He proceeded to wave his phone over a small machine sitting on the counter. I think he waved it three times north to south. Or perhaps twice north-south and then once up and down.

He seemed to expect something to happen. Of course, nothing did. So he gave a puzzled look to the cashier.

I expected the cashier to yell at him, "Stop with the mumbo-jumbo and pay up!" But no. He seemed to play along with this farce.

The cashier told him to wave his phone on the upper

surface of the little machine (as if that should make a difference). Well, he did and then the machine made a beeping noise. The cashier said, "That's better!" (what's better?), both gave a satisfied smile, and then the customer walked right out of the store with the merchandise.

I questioned the cashier how he could let the guy leave without paying. He responded "He did pay. He tapped." He then proceeded to try to sell me some wacky story, that when the customer taps his phone, it charges his bank card. As long as he has the funds, the money is transferred directly into the store's account.

Now, I saw with my own eyes, no money was exchanged. Just a bunch of hocus-pocus rituals. It is absurd to think that waving a phone will cause money to appear in your bank account.

Unless you believe that there are forces we can't see, and that we don't always understand, impacting us in ways we can't explain.

Anyway, I thought you should know what happened. With stuff like that going on in your store, I strongly recommend you get a mezuzah.

Now that's out of the way, what was your question?

What's Stopping You Getting Married?

In my family, it is strictly forbidden for any unmarried person to sit at the corner of the table. We were told from a young age that if you do sit at a corner, you will never get married. To this day I can't bring myself to sit at a corner, or let anyone else do so. Is this a Jewish belief?

Answer

This belief is widely held, and has been handed down for generations in a range of cultures. If your grandmother is Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Rumanian or Ukrainian then there is a good chance she grew up with this superstition. The fact that many Jewish families originate from those countries may explain why so many share this belief. But it doesn't come from a Jewish source.

Judaism forbids the adoption of beliefs and practices that are not sourced in our own tradition, unless they have a logical reason behind them. So if a black cat passes in front of you, we don't believe that means you will have bad luck. But walking under a ladder may bring bad luck, if you bump the ladder and someone falls on you.

So avoiding ladders makes sense, avoiding black cats doesn't. What about table corners?

An intensive statistical study into the single status of corner sitters has yet to produce any conclusive results. But using logic alone, one could argue that sitting at a corner may actually make you more marriageable, not less. It depends on your motive.

If the table is crowded, and you choose the corner spot to make more room at the table for others to sit, then you are a great candidate for marriage. Making space for another is the first step in any relationship.

On the other hand, if you sit there because you can't make up your mind which side to sit on, then perhaps this indicates an indecisive personality. Someone who finds it hard to take a position on anything, who is never here nor there but lost in between, might have a harder time committing to a relationship. That is a corner you don't want to get stuck at.

Can a Normal Person Enjoy Cricket?

I can't get my head around the rules of Shabbos. It's supposed to be a day of rest, no? So how can you relax while worrying about breaking some law or another, like opening a packet of chips the wrong way, or accidentally touching the light switch? My vision of a day of rest is sitting on the couch watching the cricket. Or even playing a game of it myself. But then I might rip some grass and that's considered ploughing...

Answer

You make a good point. What you're saying makes a lot of sense. So maybe you can help me knock some sense into a new friend of mine.

This fellow recently arrived from South America. He heard that Australians are cricket mad, and had never heard of the game before. He asked me to explain what cricket is in simple English.

So I tried to give over the basics of the game, like this:

A guy stands at one end of a rectangular patch of dirt, which is called a wicket. In his hands he holds a smooth plank of wood, called a bat. He is called the batsman.

Behind the batsman, on the edge of the wicket, are three sticks stuck in the ground. These sticks are also called wickets.

At the other end of the rectangle is another player, called the bowler, who holds a cork ball covered in red leather. He runs up and hurls the ball towards the first guy.

Note: he is not allowed to throw the ball. He must keep his arm straight as he releases it. And he must be standing behind a line. If he crosses the line before releasing the ball, the other team gets a point.

He is trying to hit the wickets (that is, the three sticks) with his ball. If he does, the batsman is out. Which is called a wicket.

So the batsman tries to stop that happening by hitting the ball with his plank, the bat. But the plank holder has to be careful. If he hits the ball in the air, it could get caught by other players spread around the field. If they catch the ball, he is out. That is also called a wicket.

On the other hand, if he is

not caught, he can run to the other end of the rectangle, and that scores him one point. But he'd better be quick, because if the ball is returned to the three sticks before he reaches the other end then he is out, without scoring the point.

Another important thing: if the ball hits the plank guy's leg in such a way that, had he not been standing there, the ball would have hit the wickets (the three sticks), then he is out (a wicket). Unless of course the ball first bounced on the wicket (that is, the patch of dirt) not in line with the wickets (the three sticks). Then it is not a wicket. If you know what I mean.

By now my friend was completely bewildered. He couldn't believe grown adults actually do this. He started asking questions:

So you're telling me that people enjoy throwing leather-bound cork balls at sticks with a guy holding a plank standing in the way?

And if the idea is to have fun, why all the rules? How does the bowler's arm being straight or bent enhance the experience? Why should the batsman have to worry about being caught?

It was at that point that I said, "Forget this. Just come to the park and we'll play. You'll see it is fun."

The rules of the game, when spoken in abstract, sound technical, pedantic and quite boring. But when playing it in real life, it just works. Like notes in a symphony, on paper they are plain black and white. But when you play it, it comes alive.

What's true of cricket is also true of Shabbos. The rule book sounds intense, extremely detailed and not much fun at all. But when you live the experience of Shabbos, those rules are notes in a symphony. They create a mood and a mindset, an atmosphere of sacred rest and a space for inner rejuvenation. The power of the Shabbos laws cannot be explained. You just have to try it.

There is no word to describe the feeling of keeping Shabbos properly. So what do we do when we don't have the right word? I guess we just call it a wicket.

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Journalist Sivan Rahav-Meir’s Life and Work Inspired by the Rebbe

Continued from page 16

Rahav-Meir gave her own story as an example of how a person can be impacted for good. Sivan grew up in Israel, and was a child TV sensation who began working as a journalist when she was only 6 years old. By the time she was 15, she had already interviewed many people and had a busy career, but she had not met anyone who kept kosher or Shabbat. That’s when she was invited by three traditional Sephardi families to join them for a Shabbat experience—an experience that left a strong impression on the young teen.

“It changed my life. I am who I am thanks to them,” she says. “They were just caring Jews; they cared about me. They invited me to see what Shabbat is all about. But then I fell in love.”

Soon after that, the young Rahav-Meir stopped appearing on TV on Shabbat and began discovering her love for Torah and mitzvahs—a love and joy she wants to share even more widely.

“We have 14 million Jews. We have 4,000 shlichot. It’s not enough. You cannot do it by yourself,” she passionately explains. “Emissaries need to make emissaries. All your communities, they’re not just communities—give them missions, tasks, things to do, make them active. As I said, I’m here today because of three families that cared about me that were my Shluchim.”

In all her travels, Rahav-Meir says, she sees that people are thirsty and hungry for meaning—and meaning isn’t just learning, it’s also giving. As soon as a person knows the letter alef, they can teach alef. If they know how to put on tefillin, they can put tefillin on others. And that’s what she loves seeing at Chabad centers around the world; communities where everyone is involved in teaching others and helping them do mitzvot.

In Israel, It’s More Challenging

She’s a well-known media personality in Israel, but Sivan Rahav-Meir has traveled extensively for her work. In 2017, she was chosen by *Globes* magazine as the most popular female me-

dia personality in the state, and in 2019, she was appointed as the World Mizrahi representative to North America, where she lectured in various Jewish communities, including many Chabad centers.

Does she think there’s a difference between journalism in Israel and outside of Israel?

“There’s something really easy in Israel because we’re all connected to the same story, the same roots,” Sivan answers. “It’s fun when Chanukah is the main headline, or Passover, or when the main thing people talk about is Rosh Hashanah. The pulse is right. Then we lived in the States for a year, and saw how there was Halloween and xmas, and it’s not your party. You don’t feel like you belong.”

Rahav-Meir observed that outside of Israel a much stronger effort has to be made to stand out and bring awareness to Jewish holidays, compared to Israel where it’s what everyone is doing anyway.

“But in a way, in Israel it’s more challenging,” she says. “Like Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said, sometimes being rich is the test, not being poor. When you have everything, you don’t feel you need to work hard, and then sometimes you don’t work at all. Sometimes, we take it for granted. People say, ‘It’s a Jewish state, why should I make an effort to act Jewish?’ We already speak Hebrew and celebrate the holidays, it can feel like it’s good enough.”

“You can grow up in Israel and not meet someone who keeps kosher and Shabbat until you’re 15. Sometimes, we underestimate the effort needed here. We do not appreciate the Israeli Shlichot enough. That’s how I feel.”

There’s another thing about the Chabad emissaries that Rahav-Meir deeply admires, and she feels it was learned from the Rebbe’s own example.

“When you’re really connected to the Rebbe, to the Torah, to the truth,” she continues, “I think you don’t have to be so nervous. The truth at the end of the day is we know Redemption will come. We’re connected to something eternal.”

In her keynote speech, she shared six uplifting stories she experienced around the world—five of success and one of frustration, which she thinks is the most important one. There are numerous times people go to shul at Chabad, send their kids to Hebrew School, participate at a seder and then disappear. “We all became addicted to Hollywood stories, viral stories, perfect stories and life. You know, what you see on the feed of every person. That’s not real life.”

Sivan Rahav-Meir hopes these stories and her talk around them left her audience feeling both inspired and motivated to accomplish more, without fear.

“But I want to tell you something. I know I was the keynote speaker, but I came there to listen. I came there to recharge, to get energy. I’ve been doing this in the past as a journalist, as a guest. I covered it for Israeli TV. And it’s really an uplifting evening. It gives you energy for the whole year.”

Continued from page 2

title “Hog Factory” painted on its brick walls. Observing the two piglets stood two big hogs. One of the hogs was commenting, “Look at the younger generation! Always trying to escape reality.”

Just what proto-Child X in Egypt had to say. Not just, “I’m scared to go!” but “Leave me out of your dreams, Moses.”

G-d said, “Let My people go!” —and Child X said, “Not my fantasy. I was born and raised in Egypt. This is my reality, and here I am to stay.”

After all, since the plagues had begun, slavery had ended. By now, being Jewish was status among Egyptians. Life in Egypt was looking better all the time.

So Child X stayed there, and died there. Idolaters, criminals and even gossip-mongers were miraculously redeemed, but Child X, says the tradition, was buried during the plague of darkness along with many others like him. Otherwise, when the Egyptians told the Children of Israel to leave, they would have forced Child X to leave as well. And for him, everyone else’s Exodus would have been his exile.

So, you see, it’s one thing to break trust, it’s another thing to deny you have any connection to begin with.

That’s what a covenant is all about: Two parties say, “No matter what, we’re in this together.” One partner may hurt the other and break all the rules, but a deal is a deal, and they’re still in the deal.

But a covenant is not a decree. A covenant also allows free choice to leave the covenant. Especially if one partner denies there was ever a covenant to begin with.

Prosecution and Defense

The Rebbe once compared this dynamic to that of Yom Kippur. Fast and refrain from work on Yom Kippur, say you’re sorry, and Yom Kippur cleanses your soul. In the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda haNassi, cited in the Talmud, you don’t even need to say you’re sorry. On Yom Kippur, G-d embraces every Jewish soul and says “You are mine. I love you no matter what.”

(“No matter what” = You still have to pay back your dad for the car you smashed up, say sorry to the nice lady whose coffee you spilled on the gown and carpet that you’re paying to get dry-cleaned, and somehow make up for the importune words that slipped out of your mouth and flushed your co-worker’s reputation down the drain. Yes, you are loved. But you still need to clean up your mess.)

There are exceptions, however. Everyone agrees that Yom Kippur works only when you keep the rules of Yom Kippur itself. Most notably, outside of life-threatening circumstances, you can’t eat.

Now, how does that work? Take the guy who loudly watched the football game throughout the entire Passover Seder, told obscene jokes throughout the Shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah, and roasted and ate his pet Vietnamese Pot-Bellied pig. All is forgiven. After all, it’s Yom Kippur. But if we catch him outside the synagogue downing a cold bottle of kombucha, he remains in the bad books!

What’s going on here?

Is the Haggadah’s Retort to the Wicked Child Wicked Parenting?

What’s going on is that Yom Kippur is trying to clean this guy up. But what if a Jew doesn’t trust Yom Kippur? What if a Jew says, “I’m thirsty. I want a cold and smelly drink. Yom Kippur means nothing to me.”

Now Yom Kippur has a big problem. As Rabbi Yosef Rosen (known as “the Rogatchover Gaon” because he was born in Rogatchov, Belarus, in 1858) explained: The only reason it’s wrong to eat now is because it’s Yom Kippur. It comes out that Yom Kippur is responsible for constructing a sin out of this Jew’s food consumption!

So how can Yom Kippur provide atonement? Even Yom Kippur can’t both soil a person and cleanse a person simultaneously. In the language of the Talmud, the prosecution can’t act simultaneously act as the defense.

Or in the language of Chasidus: On Yom Kippur, the essential connection of a Jewish soul to G-d is shining, a connection no transgression can blemish. The light of that connection can cleanse even the greatest sinner’s entire soul—as long as he doesn’t oppose it. But once he opposes that connection, the connection itself becomes his stain.

The Ultimate Exile

Same thing here: What creates exile? A promise of something further ahead.

After all, an Egyptian in Egypt is not in exile. If an Egyptian slave is released from slavery, everything is good. The Jewish people could be said to be in exile in Egypt only because they had been promised their own land, the Land of Canaan.

If so, the covenant itself, the very relationship with their forefathers and thereby with G-d, the memory of a noble past and the promise of a lofty future—this was what defined Egypt as exile and the Jewish people as a nation. When the point in time came for that promise to be fulfilled, and a Jew refused to leave, how could he be redeemed by the very same promise that was now constructing his exile?

The ultimate exile, then, is to deny that there is any exile. To deny that there is anything greater in store for you. To say, “Here I am and here is where I belong.” No place could be darker, more imprisoning. And it was impossible for the covenant to be both party to the construction of such a deep exile and demolish it at the same time.

And that’s the state of Child X, this child who says, “I don’t see any meaning in this memory of yours. It is your memory, not mine. I am not a player in this story.”

Yet, nevertheless, he will be redeemed.

Why?

Because he lies.

A Deeper Connection

After Exodus came Mount Sinai. That was the whole point of Exodus, as G-d originally told Moses, “When you will take this people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain.”

What happened at Mount Sinai that changed things so drastically? Being chosen. When we say that the Jews are “chosen,” we’re talking about the event at Mount Sinai.

Which is a very misunderstood topic.

Every critter that exists is to fulfill a certain role in a divine story—otherwise it wouldn’t be

here. It’s chosenness is its G-d-point within, its truest reality.

Stars were chosen to shine in the night. The sun was chosen to shine and make it day. The squirrel in my backyard was chosen to scutter up that tree this morning—for what reason, I have no clue.

Everything begins with a choice. Because G-d is free. He doesn’t have to create anything. But He chooses to do so. And He chooses what He will create and why. Nothing happens just because it has to, and nothing just is.

That’s probably the most essential thing you can say about G-d—that He is free to choose. Not that He has wisdom, not that He is kind, not that He is full of love, not that He is mighty. All those are attributes He chose and brought into being. But this freedom to choose, that is most essential quality of the divine. And that chosenness is the G-d-point within each thing.

If you’ve ever asked, “Why am I me, and not someone else?” well, the answer, you were chosen. That choice is what makes you “you.”

At Mount Sinai, each Jew was chosen for the mission of bringing the light of Torah into the world. That was our defining moment. That’s our G-d-point. Ever since then, that’s who we are.

That is what makes us free—not our escape from Egypt, not the plagues that Moses brought, not brains, not character, not even the Official Semitic Slave Emancipation Act of the Egyptian Monarchy. What makes us eternally free is our chosenness as a people for a mission.

As the Maharal of Prague wrote, once we left Egypt we could never be enslaved again. Even if they enslave our bodies, our souls are now essentially free. G-d’s freedom of choice became our freedom. And with that freedom, every Jewish soul chooses G-d and identifies with the Jewish people.

But wait—don’t we see Jews who say they are “not religious,” “don’t identify,” or just don’t seem to care? Like Child X, for example.

They lie. We know the truth. They themselves may not recognize it, but at their core they are inseparably one with their people. Because that’s what being chosen means. It’s not about what you think. It’s about who you are.

You can hold onto a lie for only so long. You can even hold on to it for every Yom Kippur of a lifetime. But when it comes time for our destiny as a people to be fulfilled, at that defining moment, the lie crumbles and truth is revealed.

As Moses himself described, in the end of days, “And G-d, your G-d, will return your captivity in love. He will bring you back together from all the peoples where He has scattered you.”

Whereupon Rashi, in his classic commentary, describes the scene, “It will be as though G-d Himself must actually seize hold of each individual’s hands schlepping him from his place, as it is said, ‘And you shall be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel.’”

Child X, that means you. We’ll never leave you behind.

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Winners Are Losers

The world we live in values “winning.” Although contrary statements are often expressed such as, “what really matters is that you gave it your best,” or “don’t be a perfectionist,” it is natural to seek victory. Consequently, we feel unhappy with a second or third place. If we are honest, for most of us, we believe, “winning is everything.” However, for families, such a strategy — trying to be a “winner” — could spell disaster and the ultimate loss.

Jack felt that children should never go to bed crying or upset. When he put his three-year-old daughter Karen to bed, he would tuck her in and kiss her. Without fail, when he would try to leave her bedroom she would insist on a bedtime story. Jack would return, open a book, and read. Many nights, even after two or three stories, Karen would still cry if her father left her bedside. Jack would then give in and lay down next to Karen, who would then eventually fall asleep. This nightly ordeal often took as long as an hour.

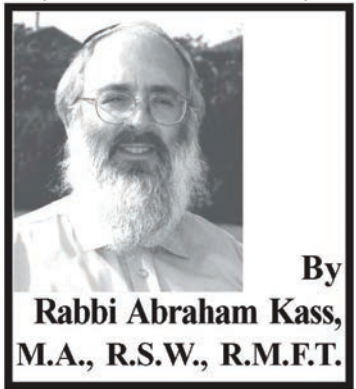
Betty, Jack’s wife, was not at all pleased with the way Jack put Karen to bed. She felt that if Jack is more assertive, eventually Karen would learn to accept a kiss good-night and then remain quiet and fall asleep. Betty resented the time Karen had with her father, Jack. She wanted to have some time with him since she didn’t see him until he came home late from work. Often, while Jack was trying to get Karen to sleep, Betty would intrude firing a derogatory comment at Jack for not taking a stand with Karen, and then slamming the door.

What is the underlying problem with this conflicted family? Simple. Jack, Betty, and little Karen, all want to be winners.

Jack wants to ‘win’ with his philosophy, “Children shouldn’t go to bed upset.” Betty wants to, ‘win’ by ‘for-

cing Jack to be with her.” Karen wants to ‘win’ her father’s attention as she falls asleep.

In a family, trying to win creates anger and conflict. When it is a pattern that is repeated over many years, and the anger and resentment becomes chronic, it can become the overriding mood in the family and make the family an



unhealthy place to be.

Some people have jobs where winning is everything. For example, professional athletes, sales people, business men and women, doctors, and lawyers, etc. These are jobs are done well by winning! Doctors strive to conquer disease and restore health. Business people try to win against their competitors. Lawyers try to win for clients.

However, even though winning is everything in certain sports, trades, and professions — families require a different strategy if they are to succeed.

Families need a unique set of rules. One of the most important family rules is that it is OK to lose!

When a husband and wife both try to “win,” the inevitable conflict — oppositions of wills — will destroy family peace and harmony.

A smart husband and wife try to avoid conflict, and they thus volunteer to “lose.” Losing ensures family peace and harmony — the most important thing in a family.

Being a ‘family loser’ does not mean one is a loser. It means they are a winner. Losing means prioritizing ma-

rital peace and harmony over and above most other issues.

Looking at the “big picture;” having marital tranquility is of far greater value than having all the small things go your way.

It is important to note, this principal of winning by losing applies primarily to small issues. Major issues like where to live, whether or not to purchase a new vehicle, and schooling for the children, should be decided together.

In Pirke Avos, a classical text on Jewish ethics, it describes four types of attitudes:

1) The person who says, “What is mine is yours and what is yours is mine,” is called an ignoramus.

2) The person who says, “What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours,” is called an average person.

3) The person who says, “What is mine is yours and what is yours is yours,” is called a righteous person.

4) The person who says, “What is yours is mine and what is mine is mine,” is called a wicked person.

We should all strive to be the third kind of personality, the righteous person that says, “What is mine is yours and what is yours is yours.”

The Torah teaches that when we lose we win. This is the kind of winning we should all strive toward. The reward is Shalom Bias, marital peace and harmony, and this is the real win.

Rabbi Kass, M.A., R.S.W., R.M.F.T., is a registered Social Worker, registered Marriage and Family Therapist, certified Hypnotherapist and award-winning educator. He has a clinical practice working with individuals, couples, and families in Toronto, Canada.



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Study Finds Wearing Tefillin has Heart Benefits

University of Cincinnati research finds that putting on tefillin while praying has significant cardiovascular benefits.

A study from the University of Cincinnati found that putting on tefillin has cardiovascular benefits.

The research discovered that Jews who regularly use tefillin in their religious practice may receive cardiovascular health benefits.

The study, published in the PLOS ONE journal, concluded that the benefits are from reduced ischemic blood flow “preconditioning” which protects against damage caused by heart attacks.

“[Tefillin] is placed on the non-dominant arm around the bicep and the forearm in a fairly tight manner. It is never worn in a fashion as to occlude the blood flow,” said Dr. Jack

10 minutes in the morning and then another data set during and after 30 minutes of wearing tefillin.

The 30 participants, healthy individuals between the ages of 18 to 40, had their heart rate measured before, during and after the wearing of tefillin.

“What we found is that wearing tefillin caused changes to the heart rate associated with lowering of the metabolism as measured via heart rate variability,” Rubinstein said.

“We can measure all kinds of different things from heart rate variability including probably the most important which is parasympathetic tone. Does it relax you and does it cause your metabolism [to] come down?”

Rubinstein noted that the study concluded there is a measurable effect during



Rubinstein of the Division of Cardiovascular Health in the UC College of Medicine. “This is traditionally worn for about 30 minutes continuously during prayers which involve sitting and standing resulting in occasional retightening of the strap around your arm.”

According to Rubinstein, the binding of the arm may serve as “preconditioning” and offer a significant degree of protection against the damage that takes place when someone has an acute ischemia (sudden loss of blood flow) or after the supply of blood is restored to an organ after an ischemic event known as a reperfusion.

“Such injuries occur during a heart attack when a section of the heart is deprived of oxygen and then damaged further when blood flow is reestablished,” the research noted.

Rubinstein explained that his team measured baseline data on participants for

and after wearing tefillin.

“It means that if we can have people wearing tefillin or a similar device, and they can get themselves to be preconditioned every day, we expect that those people should be protected or should have a decreased amount of damage if they should get a heart attack during the time they are protected,” he said. “This is a low-intensity way of protecting people from heart attacks.”

“You have a very common and very deadly disease. We are showing a path through which anyone can precondition themselves to decrease the amount of damage that they suffer from a heart attack by wearing a very simple device,” says Rubinstein. “This is a potential game changer for how we approach cardiovascular disease prevention. Decreasing the amount of heart attack damage by even just two-fold is something that will change outcomes for millions of people.”

KADDISH

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OUR LINK TO THE FUTURE.**

The recital of Kaddish is the bond which unites the generations from the immemorial unto eternity. It is the way we show our timeless devotion to our parents and loved ones. In the event you cannot personally observe this hallowed expression of love for the duration of eleven months, alternate arrangements can be made through the Chabad Lubavitch Organization. You may also consider placing bronze name plates of your departed ones on our Memorial Board which will insure The Observance of Yahrzeit in perpetuity.

For further information call 905.731.7000





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Journalist Sivan Rahav-Meir’s Life and Work Inspired by the Rebbe

By Bruria Efuné
JERUSALEM — In her travels and work as a television presenter, radio host and one of Israel’s most well-known and admired journalists, Sivan Rahav-Meir has visited Chabad centers in far-flung locations around the world.

Personally inspired by the teachings and example of the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory—Rahav-Meir is herself passionate about spreading the joy and light of Judaism. Every day, she sends out her “daily thought” with a Torah-inspired insight on current events to an audience of tens of thousands in 17 languages. Her love for sharing the weekly Torah portion with secular Israeli viewers is so popular that she’s been parodied for it on Israel TV’s leading satire show.

With all this in mind, it’s natural that she was asked to be a keynote speaker on Sunday, Feb. 12, at the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Women Emissaries (Kinus Hashluchos) in Brooklyn, N.Y. Her speech at the event gala banquet had an in-room audience of more than 4,000 women and was broadcast to hundreds of thousands more who tuned in worldwide to the webcast.

“First of all, I’m really privileged,” says Rahav-Meir. “I spoke in so many places and to so many types of people and audiences, including prime ministers and the heads of the IDF. But I was more excited than ever because I think it’s like speaking to the Jewish world. It’s not just the 4,000 women in the hall; they represent millions of Jewish women throughout the world from Eilat to Alaska. So I truly feel it’s like giving a message to the whole Jewish world, which sometimes made me anxious and nervous.”

But no matter how many people are reached, she says, it’s not enough. “There is a beautiful [quote from] the Rebbe which I

really connected with,” she continues. “The Rebbe said: ‘I’m always happy, but I’m never



The resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe is always her first stop upon arrival in New York.

satisfied.’ There is always optimism, but there is still so much to do. The conference banquet hall is huge! 4,000! But it’s not enough.”

“You need more,” she continued. “Not just more emissaries of Chabad; you need to make Chabad into something contagious. And we saw how viral things are when it comes to Covid. So now I believe Chabad should be the next truly global phenomenon.”

Inspired in Her Work
On her last trip to the United States, Rahav-Meir shared a photo with her social-media audience of herself at the Ohel in Queens, N.Y., the resting place of the Rebbe. In the caption, she explained that it’s always her first stop upon arrival in New

York. When asked about it, she says “Yeah, my husband laughs at me. He says I only agree to be a scholar-in-residence in New York because I want to go to the Ohel.”

During Covid-19 lockdowns, she recalls people saying they missed visiting Italy or Mexico, but when asked, Rahav-Meir said she missed the Ohel and the holy connection felt there—a connection that she sees as a foundational strength of the Chabad emissaries wherever they go.

When facing any challenge, she perceives that this rooted connection and belief, allows emissaries to keep calm and focused, and remember why they are where they are. “You’re talking about something eternal, you don’t need to get bothered by

birthday, he and Sivan designed a poster full of visionary quotes from the Rebbe and hung it up in his home studio. She shared some of the quotes they chose.

“Why was the radio created? The Rebbe explains that the radio was created in order to teach Torah,” she explains. “It’s true we use it for other purposes—to tell people the news, and sometimes for bad things, and then the content is not positive. But the tool is holy! We should use it for holiness.”

The couple make an effort to

use the radio and other communications as a tool to share good with people around the world and hope that others will, too.

“You know, Rashi has no Facebook page. And Rambam, he didn’t upload a story for 800 years. So in a way, I feel we’re supposed to do it in their name. They’re not there. But the people are there on social media and they are interested, and want something short and accessible.”

A Personal Journey to Jewish Observance told

Continued on page 14

1940...

Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson, o.b.m., came to America, to bring the light of Torah and warmth of Mitzvas to a spiritual wasteland.

Then \$54.00 was considered a worthy donation.

His son-in-law Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson became the seventh leader of Chabad and encouraged his disciples to serve as Torah ambassadors throughout the world. During those 44 years, more than 1500 Lubavitch Centres were established throughout the world, serviced by some five thousand Shluchim (Emissaries) who have dedicated their lives to help enhance the quality of Jewish life.

Then too \$54.00 was considered a worthy donation.

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.

2023...

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Should you wish to sell your Chometz for the duration of Pesach, please complete the form below & mail it at once to:
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Thornhill, Ontario L4J 3V9
so that it reaches us no later than Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

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Certificate Authorizing the Sale of Chometz

Delegation of Power of Attorney

This is to certify that I, the undersigned, fully empower and permit any of the Rabbi’s under the administration of Chabad Lubavitch of Ontario, to act in my place and stead and on my behalf to sell all Chometz possessed by me (knowingly or unknowingly) as defined by the Torah and Rabbinic Law, including chometz, doubt of chometz and all forms of chometz mixture. In addition, chometz that tends to harden and adhere to the inside surface of pans, pots or any usable cooking utensil are to be considered as above. I hereby delegate authorization to lease all places wherein the chometz may be found by me, especially in the premises located at:

_____ and elsewhere.
The said Rabbi has the full right to sell and lease by transaction, as he deems fit and proper and for such time which he believes necessary in accordance with all detailed terms and detailed forms as explained in the general authorization contract which the said Rabbi will use to detail the sale of Chometz.

This General authorization is made a part of this agreement. Also do I hereby give the said Rabbi full power and authority to appoint a substitute in his stead with full power to sell and to lease as provided herein. The above given power is in conformity with all Torah, Rabbinic regulations and laws and also in accordance with the laws of the Province of Ontario and the Confederation of Canada.

And to this I hereby affix my signature on this _____ day of _____ in the year 2023.

Name _____ Signature _____

Address _____

BEST WISHES FOR A KOSHER & ENJOYABLE PESACH



Rahav-Meir and her husband, Yedidya Meir, co-host a weekly radio show on Israel’s army radio and feel that the Rebbe’s vision has strongly reached them.