



The World of Lubavitch

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Annual Dinner Honours

Steven Latner

The 36th annual dinner of Chabad Lubavitch held on Thursday, November 20, 2014, drew a large crowd and countless well wishers. It was truly delightful to witness the prevailing warm atmosphere as hundreds of friends welcomed the opportunity to join in the tribute to Steven Latner. "This honour was long overdue," said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum, Regional Director of Chabad Lubavitch, "and gave us the opportunity to recognize the Latner family for their long

standing support."

"It all began some thirty-five years ago when I came to the Greenwin office without an appointment to see Steven's father Mr. Albert Latner," he said. "He offered me a Havana cigar and although I don't smoke, I lit up and that gave me a 45 minute window of opportunity to explain what Chabad Lubavitch is all about."

The evening program was chaired by Richard Cooper, a good friend of Chabad and brother-in-law of the honouree.

After brief remarks he introduced the guest artist Alex Clare. In addition to singing and strumming some of his popular songs, Alex related his spiritual odyssey to Yiddishkeit after being introduced to Chabad in Jerusalem some 10 years ago. Raised in a secular home he embraced ritual observances step by step. As a musical artist the path was fraught with numerous challenges, especially Shabbat and Kosher.

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Four Ways to use Your Head

By Yanki Tauber

Which is greater--theoretical knowledge or practical experience? Which are truer, purer, more useful, more important--the things we know with our bodies or the things we ponder inside our brains? Academics and basketball coaches have been debating the question for centuries, and it's unlikely to be resolved in another 1,000-word polemic.

But perhaps we're asking the wrong question. Maybe the question is not whether theoretical knowledge is superior or inferior to the practical, but whether there can be "theoretical knowledge" at all. Does such a thing actually exist, or is it just a theory?

Three people are talking in a doctor's waiting room.

This is my body, my life," says Patient #1. "Just because the guy has a diploma hanging on his wall doesn't mean that I'm going to blindly follow his instructions. I'm going to do my own research. I'm not doing or taking anything until I'm convinced that that's the best way to go..."

"Let's face it," counters Patient #2. "It may be my body, but right now, the guy behind that door knows more about it than I do... I'm going to educate myself about my illness, but that will take time. Until I acquire that knowledge, I'm best off following the doctor's instructions."

"The guy behind that door spent eight years studying to be a doctor," opines Patient #3, "and another twenty-five years treating people in our condition. You think I'll ever acquire that kind of knowledge googling the internet? I'd just be wasting my time. I'm going to follow the doctor's instructions and leave the thinking to him... That's his job!"

Three ways to be a patient. Three ways to be a husband, a wife, a parent, a neighbor. Three ways to be a shoemaker, a teacher, an artist, a CEO. Do I defer to those who know better? Do I try to figure it out on my own? Or do I adopt a two-step approach, beginning by following those with superior knowledge and expertise until my own knowledge and expertise take over?

Three ways to live a life. Or is there perhaps a fourth way?

Patient #4 speaks up: "Patient #3 is right -- no matter how much I research and educate myself, the doctor will still know more than me. So I'm going to listen to him, certainly now when I know next to nothing, and also later, after I've learned all that I can..."

"But if you're going to follow the doctor's instructions anyway," Patient #3 interjects, "why bother to study and learn? What's the point?"

"Because, like Patient #1 says, it's my body and my life. I want, I need to understand what I'm doing and why I'm doing it..."

"So it's just to make you feel better about the fact that you're submitting to a higher authority?" challenges Patient #1.

It's not just that. The doctor needs me as an active partner in my cure. He needs me to be asking the right questions, raising the right objections, even offering my own ideas; he needs me to be reporting to him how my body is reacting to the treatment, what hurts and what feels better--none of which I could properly do if I did not understand, as best as I could, the how and why of what he's telling me to do. If my mind isn't also involved--if I'm just a passive body carrying out

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The Bridge Spanning the Infinite Abyss

Miss...
 Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Blessing and Greeting:
 I received your letter with some delay. In it you write about the uncertainty you feel regarding commitment to Yiddishkeit, inasmuch as you think that life in accordance with the Torah and mitzvot is restrictive, and limits the individual in personal creativeness, particularly in the area of thinking and choosing for oneself, etc.; so that it is hard to reconcile such commitment with the idea of personal freedom

Frankly, this attitude is somewhat surprising, coming from a thinking person. I suppose the difficulty here is due to the superficial understanding of the meaning of the "acceptance of the yoke of the Torah and mitzvot," because the word "yoke" suggests restrictiveness.

In truth, however, there are many things in daily life that a person accepts and follows without question, even if he or she is a highly gifted intellectual, with a searching bent of mind. Since you attend college, and have studied science, etc., you surely know that one does not go about starting everything in physics and technology from the beginning, by verifying everything through personal research and experimentation. For example, a person will board a plane without having first researched aerodynamics, etc., to verify that it is safe to fly in it, and that it will bring one to one's destination at approximately the scheduled time.

Or take an example from the area of physical health. It is well-established that there are things which are useful or harmful to one's health. A person will not go about trying to verify the efficacy of a particular drug through personal experimentation. Even if a person has a very strong personal inclination to do some research and experimentation, they will surely choose areas which have not been previously researched.

This generally accepted attitude is quite understandable and logical. For inasmuch as experts have amply researched



these areas and have determined what is good and what is harmful to physical health, or have established the methods as to further technological advancement, it would be, at best, a waste of time to try to go over all those experiments from the beginning. Additionally, there is no assurance that one may not make some error, and arrive at wrong conclusions, with disastrous effects, as experience has shown in some cases.

Ultimate Health

What has been said above

in regard to physical health is also true in regard to spiritual health, and how the Neshama [soul] can attain perfection and fulfillment. All the more so since spiritual health is generally related to physical health, particularly insofar as a Jew is concerned.

Now the Creator of man, Who is also the Creator and Master of the whole world, surely has the best qualifications that might be expected of any authority, to know what is good for man and for the world in which he lives. In his goodness,

G-d has already provided us with complete and final results, having put us on notice that if a person will conduct his daily life in a certain way, then he will have a healthy Neshama in a healthy body, and it will be good for him both in this world and in the world to come. He has also left some areas where a person can carry on his own experimentation, in other matters that do not interfere with the rules laid down by Him.

In other words, it is quite certain that if a human being

lived long enough, and had the necessary capacities, to make all sorts of experimentation, without distraction and interference and without error, he would undoubtedly arrive at the very same conclusions which we already find in the Torah which G-d has given us, namely, the need to observe Shabbat, eat kosher food, etc. But as mentioned above, G-d in His infinite goodness – and it is in the nature of the Good to do good -- which is to spare us all the trouble, as well as the possibility of error, and has already given us the results beforehand, for the benefit of both the person who has the inclination and the capacity to search, as well as those who do not.

The expression "yoke" in relation to accepting the Torah and mitzvot in daily life is to be understood in the sense that human nature makes it necessary to act on imperatives. For human nature and the yetzer hara [evil inclination] are such that an individual might easily succumb to temptation.

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Is Golf the Path to Utopia

Many have expressed the sentiment the the one Jewish ideal that they can't get their head around is Moshiach - the belief in the coming of the Messiah. What good is achieved by waiting for some future utopia? Shouldn't we focus on the present, rather than dreaming about the future? Why is the belief in the coming of the Messiah so central to Judaism?

Some of the deepest truths I ever learnt were from my golf teacher. He was a sharp guy, with a keen eye for detail. He would observe my

swinging style and point out what I needed to work on. From him I gained more than just golf advice.

One consistent flaw in my swing was my follow through. The pro noticed that as soon as my club hits the ball my arms lock and the club stops. No good, he said. You need a full follow through. After hitting the ball you must keep swinging, making a complete semi-circle in the air.

This made no sense to me. What difference does it make what I do with the club *after* I have hit the ball? Contact has been made between iron and ball, and whatever power I have put into the shot is there already. Will the ball travel further if I follow through? I can understand why backswing is important - the more I pull the club back, the more momentum the swing has. But once the ball is hit, who cares what I do with the club? Whether I keep swinging or stop, throw the club away or eat it should make no difference to the ball that has already been hit. Why follow through?

My coach gave me the

answer. The follow through doesn't begin after you hit the ball, it begins as soon as you lift the club. A swing that will end in a full follow through is a different swing entirely. What *will be* effects what *is*. The destination influences the whole journey. Where you are going defines where you are.

This principle is true in golf, baseball, tennis and cricket. And it's true in life too. What you believe about tomorrow shapes how you

view today. Where your life is headed determines how your life is lived.

If the world is randomly hurtling through space, bound to eventually collide with an asteroid and return to vapour, if human history is a directionless romp through time, then we are going nowhere, and my life certainly has no significance. Why work, why build, why love, why do anything if it all ends in nothingness?

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ON OUR COVER

Joy Of Jerusalem

By Hebron Artist Baruch Nachshon



During the three Jewish festivals, Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot, Jews from all over Israel made a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem to spend the holidays in the vicinity of the Holy Temple. They brought with them gifts of produce and livestock to be offered in the Temple.

The World of Lubavitch Chabad Lubavitch of Ontario

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Camp Gan Israel Continues to Grow

The sign of life is growth, and this axiom is certainly evident by the continuous expansion of Camp Gan Israel, Toronto. In tandem with the increased enrollment, year after year, additional bunks are being built and numerous amenities are being added. With an objective to strengthen the body and nurture the soul, the added features will enhance both, the recreational pleasure and the spiritual experience.

At present an additional double bunk house is under construction to be completed as soon as the ice thaws and the snow melts. So too, a large tract of land was cleared and leveled for a full size baseball field. Motion activated playground equipment will also be added.

To enhance Torah studies we will be erecting gazebos. These sheltered structures with a bench along the inside perimeter will create a conducive environment for Torah study. So too, the inviting enclaves will become a destination for group discussions, program planning, and a place for friends to just chill.

No doubt, the primary objective of Camp Gan Israel is to offer a meaningful summer

experience which caters to body and soul. Regrettably, often, and for many, the summer months are a “time out” slot to excuse ourselves from religious responsibilities. But, the Rebbe o.b.m. taught us differently, “The summer, he noted, can be compared to the athlete that is about to attempt a “broad jump,” and in order to maximize success he takes a few steps back. So too, while we may introduce some relaxation and recreation in our daily routine, the summer is not a vacation from Torah study or Mitzvah observance.

Currently, we are preparing for our fourth season. Our grounds and amenities are still a “work in progress,” yet as a result of the generosity of a few dear friends this ambitious project is maturing beyond our expectations. In fact the enrollment for the month of July when we host the girl’s, is at our capacity, and the boys session for August is filling up nicely.

Indeed, this undertaking has been very well received and holds much promise. It will bring much satisfaction to the entire community as we extend the horizon of Jewish life, both literally and figuratively.



Left to right: Goldie Grossbaum, camp co-director; Esti Grossbaum, Rabbi Yitzchok Grossbaum camp co-director; son Mendel, Sidney Spiegel, Rabbi Z. Aron Grossbaum, Mark Steinfeld at the Donors Wall in Camp Gan Israel in Haliburton

Annual Dinner Honours Steven Latner

Continued from page 1

While this has caused him to lose a record deal, unexpected doors began to open. During an extended dry spell with no “gig’s” scheduled, his song

the connection matured and intensified. Today, the third generation, their children are also lending a helping hand to ensure the success of Chabad Lubavitch.

This was clearly portrayed by

see the future.” The slogan drew attention to the fact that in order to safeguard continuity, traditional values must be maintained and embraced. Indeed, after some four decade of public service, Chabad



(From left to right) Murray Belzberg, Lynda & Steve Latner, Rabbi Zalman & Esther Grossbaum

“Too Close” was featured in several Microsoft Internet Explorer 9 advertisements, and enjoyed incredible popularity with over 54 million hits on YouTube. Soon after, he became a sensation and soon after had concerts scheduled all over the world.

A video presentation familiarized the august assembly with the endeavours and scope of Chabad Lubavitch throughout the GTA and beyond. In his remarks Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum paid tribute to Mr. Albert Latner who embraced Chabad Lubavitch some 40 years ago. He noted, “While still in our infancy the Latner family graciously put all their resources at our disposal, including their office staff, their trades, suppliers, and consultants.” Indeed, their expertise as land developers and builders facilitated construction of the Chabad Lubavitch headquarters at 770 Chabad Gate in Thornhill. Soon after, the next generation, Steven and Michael continued the partnership. During the course of some three decades

Jack and Lilly, two of Steven’s children who gracefully weaved a verbal tapestry which so eloquently detailed the strong bond and impact of Chabad and Rabbi Grossbaum on their family.

The merger between Chabad and the honouree was further underscored albeit in a most humorous fashion, via a parodic video presentation of the classic Broadway tune, “If I was a Rich Man.”

A magnificent silver Torah crown was presented to Steven Latner by Murray Belzberg who extolled the virtues of the honouree, but not before injecting some humorous anecdotes as well.

In acknowledgement, Steven expressed his admiration for Chabad for promoting Jewish pride and reaching out indiscriminately to Jews all around the world. “Me and my family have been blessed and enriched by our deep and long time connection to Chabad,” he concluded.

This year the battle cry for the annual campaign was “*We keep our eyes on the past, so you can*

Lubavitch is recognized as a catalyst that connects Jews with Judaism. From the flagship centre in Thornhill, the Chabad Lubavitch Organization reaches out to the entire Jewish community with programs that continue to educate and promote traditional values. With an unrestricted mandate that caters to young and old alike, new initiatives are constantly added. Most significant of late is the embrace of technology and our informative web presence on line. The cyber site: chabad.ca is a virtual reservoir of all things Jewish. In addition to numerous essays, holiday guidance, lifecycle info, the site connects the entire Jewish world. Whether you are looking for kosher food in Beijing, to purchase a mezuzah for a friend in South Dakota, map a trail of comfort (and assistance) for your son as he backpacks through Asia, the site brings it all to the screen of your smart phone, or computer screen.

In acknowledgement, all major contributors received a magnificent silver Kiddush cup in recognition of their leadership role in the campaign.

Pesach is on the Air on 680 News

It’s hard to get noticed today. Yes, with a fashion trend that embraces “Wear what you want,” you can see people with winter coats alongside others in short sleeves, some in boots others in flip-flops. And then others are talking on their cell or texting while they walk. Indeed, today, we are all inundated by a smorgasbord of social media outlets. While this has created much electronic interaction, often the message is a passing blur and vague. Yet

(car) radio remains the exception and grabs our attention.

Hence, Chabad Lubavitch has once again turned to the airwaves. During the week before Pesach, 680 News will feature a public service Pesach message. The content will promote the most fundamental aspects of Pesach and the Seder. This project will enable Chabad Lubavitch to reach thousands of Jews in the GTA and beyond and encourage them to “sell their Chometz,” and obtain



Earl Mann reads the radio ad

Shmurah Matzah at least for the Seder.

The text has been carefully prepared and is presented by noted broadcaster Mr. Earl Mann. The message begins with traditional holiday music that piques your interest and gets you to “listen up.” “As long as people still do the driving, they’ll be listening to the radio,” said Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum, of Chabad Lubavitch.

Earlier this year, during

the week of Chanukah, Chabad Lubavitch engaged 680 News to broadcast a Chanukah message. The project was very well received and addition to promoting Menorah lighting, it brought much joy to commuters as they suddenly head Jewish music while fighting traffic fatigue.

The project has been made possible and is sponsored by Steeles Memorial Chapel.

Friendship Circle Around the Year



Tu B'Shvat plants



E.C. volunteers enjoy distributing gifts they collected at their Toy Drive



Friends@Home, hanging out together and appreciating each other's company



Chanukah carnival



A favourite activity, music with Ariella



Friends forever high "Sing"

Purim in the GTA



Dancing and Revelrie at the JRCC



Purim in the 60's with Chabad of Markham



Drumming Circle at Purim in the jungle Chabad of the Beaches



Lunch time Megillah reading at Toronto City Hall



Baking the Matzah at the Chabad Model Matza bakery



Annual Photo Captures Thousands of Faces

By Dovid Zaklikowski - Brooklyn, NY

For some photographers, thousands of rabbis standing around the red 'no standing' sign outside Lubavitch World Headquarters represent a dream; for others, a nightmare. Getting every face into the frame is quite the challenge for the official photographers. If years of experience have taught them, it's also made the challenge greater: with each passing year, the number of shlichim grows.

Setting up and getting the rabbis—representing some 87 countries—together for the annual "group" photo outside Lubavitch World Headquarters, 770 Eastern parkway in Brooklyn in itself a scene worthy of a photo essay, brings many photographers back year after year. The 2014 conference began Wednesday, Nov 19 - Nov 24 afternoon and continues through Monday morning.

Rabbi Eliezer Zalmanov, Chabad representative to Munster, Indiana, feels that the photos session is one of the highlights of the five-day conference. "Sure, the entire weekend is spent in the company of thousands of my colleagues from across the globe, but there is something extremely special about everyone posing together."

The group photo was a part of the first conference in 1983. Back then it was only a national

conference and a paltry 60 rabbis participated.

"It was a simple feat, everyone jumped up on one of the bleachers inside Lubavitch World Headquarters, the photographer said, 'squeeze in' and *gegeingen*, that was it," says Rabbi Lipa Brennan, one of the convention organizers.

Today, pulling several thousand people together for a photo session is a logistical exploit. The multi-tasking, hi-energy rabbis are not a docile group and getting them comply for a sitting (or standing) is quite a maneuver. One is busy catching up on his daily study routine, another is comparing notes with a colleague and another is on an urgent call with a community member thousands of miles away. Multiply that hundreds of times over.

If that isn't enough, the photographer must then manage to get each of the thousands of faces in focus, in one frame. "If someone would ask us to shoot 2,000 people, we'd probably think it's a prank," photographer Noam Galai said. But it's exactly what the official photographer Chaim Perl and fourteen others set out to do.

Perl has figured a way around some of the difficulties. "There are two great challenges, one is the rabbis are in the shade and the sun is facing the lens. I therefore study the sun and its positions to know exactly the best time to take



The Group Selfie

This year, a few tech-savvy rabbis decided to add a modern twist to the photo. With the help of local photographer Chaim Perl, and using Twitter and WhatsApp to coordinate, they gathered before the main shot to take a massive group selfie.

Rabbi Levi Slonim of the Rohr Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life at Binghamton University in New York was part of the group triggering the selfie. "We are really one big family," Slonim said of his colleagues. "Who better to be with, for what might be a world-record-setting group selfie?"

the photo. The second is to get thousands of people to look into the camera at the same time."

Some of the *shlichim* find the photo session inspires reflection: "I comprehend that I am just one small nail in a much greater picture. Every year when there are so many more Chabad emissaries in the photo—and by today I cannot even see everyone in the photo—I become emotional," Rabbi Levi Mondshine, Chabad representative to Smolensk, Russia, says. "This is the time of the convention that strengthens me most."

As the bleachers set up outside are almost full, Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, the Vice Chairman of the educational arm of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, takes the time to review the day's schedule with the *shlichim*.

"Each individual here represents a unique Jewish community in a country, a city or town. The entire world is represented here, in one place."

There is nothing, he says, that needs to be added. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words.

Year after year, mainstream media outlets cover the group picture at the convention. In 2012, The Daily Mail wrote,

"Now that's a lot of rabbis! Incredible images as 3,000 rabbis from all over the world come together on Eastern Parkway."

As the photo session comes to an end, the *shlichim* erupt in song. Some do a dance. Then the crowd disperses.

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The Part of Me that is Forever Chabad

By Paul Shaviv

On Sunday I was a guest at the closing dinner of the annual Chabad 'Kinus Shluchim 5775 - 2014'. This took place in a huge hangar-like space in the Brooklyn dockyards that had been transformed in to a hi-tech event hall for the occasion. (There is a good eight-minute video by Hillel Engel on YouTube.) More than five thousand people sat down for dinner.

There were two main



speakers - one was Yuli Edelstein, the Speaker of the Knesset, who spoke brilliantly about his time in the Soviet jail, and his early contacts with Chabad in Soviet Russia. The other was a UK Chabadnik from Wimbledon (home of the tennis tournament), Rabbi Dubov, who spoke for too long but it was hugely entertaining, and at times very moving.

It was hugely impressive. There are just under 3,000 Chabad families serving as 'shuchim' in eighty countries all over the world -- from Tashkent to Tasmania, in many African countries, in China, S Korea, and everywhere you can think of, including 49 US states. No other Jewish presence comes close to this.

The theme of the Kinus was 'The Rebbe is with you on your journey'. For the record, none of the speakers implied that the Rebbe was still physically alive, and references to the Mashiach were all carefully phrased in the future tense. But the spiritual presence of the Rebbe was electrically and tangibly alive for all of these shluchim. It is the belief that they have a spiritual partner as their immanent support that gives them the ability to live and work in total physical and spiritual isolation. That, I have to assume, is the secret of a Rebbe and his Chasidim.

Think what you will of Chabad, the Rebbe, or Chassidim in general, but it is undeniable that Menachem Mendel Schneerson personally inspired (inspires) the existence and promotion of Jewish life for thousands, or hundreds of thousands of Jews who would otherwise be totally lost. On campuses, in communities, as individuals - Chabad is there for them, with unbounded love, "one Jew at a time, one mitzvah at a time".

Many other Jewish groups and streams look totally desiccated by comparison.

What interested me too were some of the items that got huge applause -- the IDF, Israel, battling Antisemitism. Support for Israel and Israelis was unequivocal (what other Orthodox group would invite Yuli Edelstein as their main speaker?) They also had no hesitation in showing men and women equally in all of the videos, displays and photos.

The future, my friends, might belong to them.....

I was invited to the Kinus by my (young) friend, Rabbi Didi Waks, who with his wife and two very young children is just opening Chabad on the campus of Hamilton College in upstate New York. He will do well. At the Kinus, I had the enormous pleasure of meeting my old friend and teacher Rabbi Shmuel Lew, from London, England -- now a senior, beloved and respected figure in Chabad worldwide. It is, I realized, exactly fifty years since we first met. This story illustrates the power of Chabad.

In 1964, as a 14-15 year old, I was running a Jewish youth group ('Jewish Youth Study Groups') in a large, gloomy synagogue in Golders Green. The Jewish community in the UK in those years was deadly -- demoralized, semi-Victorian, stultified and without any spark or direction. We were all expected to quietly assimilate. I had read in the local Jewish newspaper something about a new organization called 'Lubavitch' that had opened up in London.

I called them, explained who we were, and asked them to come and speak. We fixed a date. (Years later, Shmuel Lew - maybe Faivish Vogel - told me that it was the very first 'cold call' invitation that Lubavitch ever received from an Anglo-Jewish organization.)

Come the appointed Sunday evening, at 8:00 PM I went outside to the synagogue entrance to wait for the 'Guest speaker'. We didn't really know what to expect. What did a "Lubavitcher" even look like? After a few minutes, a small white van came slowly round the corner. It stopped. It looked as though it might seat three or four people at most. The doors opened and six, maybe eight bearded, hatted figures piled out. To this day I do not know how they all crammed into that small van. We greeted them and they came into the room where we met, singing and clapping.

As reserved, polite English boys and girls we didn't quite know what to do. A "Rabbi Lew" introduced someone who he said would speak -- Rabbi Berel Baumgarten, the 'Rebbe's shaliach' [what on earth did that mean?] to South America, who was passing through London. But fifty years later I remember what he said, because it blew me away completely. "The Rebbe told me to go to South America and spread Yiddishkeit. So I packed a suitcase with tins of tuna and boxes of matzah, and I took a plane to Argentina. I got off at the other end and looked around, wondering what to do next....."

I cannot describe the impact of those words on me. The idea that someone would 'get on a plane' to an unknown destination with the single intention of spreading Yiddishkeit was like a revelation. Not only was it mind-blowing; it was inspirational. There were people in the world who really cared about the survival of Judaism and Torah!

I didn't become a Chabadnik, but I have spent my entire professional career in Jewish education, eventually heading the two largest and most important mainstream Jewish schools in North America -- Tanenbaum CHAT in Toronto, and Ramaz in New York. A part of that choice, a part of that career and a part of that inspiration, belongs to Berel Baumgarten.

Paul Shaviv was born and educated in London, and has lived in Israel, Australia, Canada and the USA. For fourteen years he was the Director of Education at TanenbaumCHAT, the Community High School in Toronto; since 2012, and until the end of this school year, he is the Head of School at Ramaz in New York. He has written a practical guide to the management of Jewish High Schools:



100 French Hearing Impaired 'hear' the Megilla



The crowd 'listens'

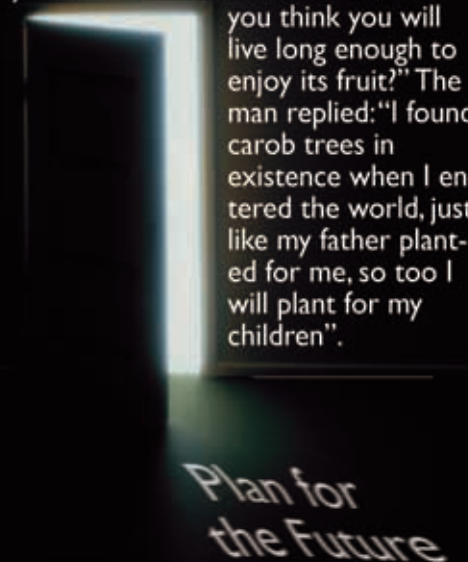
It's not the first time that the Jewish hearing impaired people enjoy a Purim Party in Paris. But it's the first time that they could hear the Megillah. How is it possible? With sign-language of course!

Thanks to Rabbi **Shmuel Azimov** of Beth Lubavitch, 100 hearing impaired people enjoyed a very special reading of the Megilla at Beth Chaya Mushka girls school. While Rabbi Leizer Lu-



Rabbi Leizer reads the Megilla and Rabbi Isser translates

The Talmudic Sage, Choni Hamagle once noticed a man planting a carob tree and inquired: "It will take seventy years to mature and bear fruit, do you think you will live long enough to enjoy its fruit?" The man replied: "I found carob trees in existence when I entered the world, just like my father planted for me, so too I will plant for my children".



When planning for the future or writing a Will please consider the Chabad Lubavitch Organization of Southern Ontario. For further information and to arrange for special bequests.

Please call: Rabbi Zalman Grossbaum at 905-731-7000. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

becki read the Megillah, his brother Rabbi Isser Lubbecki translated the entire Megillah into sign language.

Afterwards, they enjoyed a sumptuous meal prepared by Isser and his wife. They could now sit down to eat and talk -- in sign language. They exchanged addresses and the children received presents for their costumes. Of course, all men and young boys put on Tefillin, some of them for the first time ever. They also received and exchanged Mishloach Manot and gave Matanot Laevionim.

A very special Purim indeed!

Chabad on Campus Marks a Major Milestone: 220 Centers Worldwide

Rabbi Berel & Esther Leah Grunblatt couldn't wait to get to work.

The young couple moved to Cambridge this year to start the International Jewish Student Center to serve the students from foreign countries, who flock to the 30 universities in the Cambridge/Boston area. "Many of the foreign students, coming from different cultures and speaking different languages, feel more comfortable socializing with other student of similar backgrounds", explains Rabbi Grunblatt who is originally from Argentina. "So Rabbi Hirshy Zarchi, the founder and director of Chabad of Harvard established our new center".

Chabad on Campus just rolled out an impressive new number: It has officially surpassed its 200th center—gone well beyond that, in fact—for a grand total of 220 centers worldwide.

In the last year alone, 33 Chabad-Lubavitch couples have settled themselves on college campuses in the United States, Canada, South America and Israel. Twenty-seven new Chabad centers have opened up, with another six couples having joined existing centers.

Chabad on Campus emissaries, are now poised to teach, entertain and advise even more students and faculty, extending their reach farther than ever before.

to grow and learn; they have so much energy. You can see them change while they're there. They feel empowered, and we want them to also be empowered by their Jewish heritage."

Centralized Resources for Emissaries and Students

Advising and connecting with young Jews at such a crucial time in their educational, social and spiritual lives has been an important part of Chabad's outreach efforts and the reason for establishing Chabad on Campus International.

It's part of the continued growth that began in the early 1950s. The Rebbe began sending rabbinical students to campuses to serve as a resource for students. Since the 1960s, Chabad campus centers have opened their doors to Jewish students, regardless of their backgrounds or observance levels.

Those involved on the ground know how important this task remains.

"It is vital that Jewish students—at this transformative time in their lives—have the opportunity to be an integral part of a vibrant Jewish community," says Rabbi Yossy Gordon, executive vice president of Chabad on Campus International. "That can mean attending holiday or Shabbat services, studying Torah individually or taking a larger class, having a kosher meal, or just getting time to unwind and socialize with other Jewish students. Young adults can get connected in a safe and nurturing environment during the years they spend at university.

"Chabad is very real for them," he emphasizes. "It's a place where they can grow in their Judaism, meet others with



similar backgrounds and interests, and be themselves."

A Focus on Dinners and Dialogue

In addition to Chabad on Campus centers popping up all over North America, Israel is seeing a boon in Chabad services at its secondary-educational institutions.

Rabbi Dovid Kurtz, director of the Israeli branch of Chabad on Campus International, assures that more are on the way. "In the past, Rabbi Gil Blizovski, who also serves as campus rabbi at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, was among a handful of Chabad on Campus rabbis in Israel," he explains. "However, in the past few years, many new *shluchim* have joined Chabad on Campus in Israel.

"In the last year alone, 21 new couples were added, joining the six who were here previously. In total, we now serve 23 campuses."

At the Netanya Academic College, Rabbi Shneur Landa, who co-directs the Chabad on Campus there with his wife, Musya, says that "most of the students know Chabad from their post-army travels in Thailand, South America or India. So when they see us, they are really excited to reconnect and relive those experiences."

Now starting their second year as emissaries—they set up shop last fall—he notes that hundreds of students filled out questionnaires on what they would like to see Chabad do on campus, with some very heartening results. "There was one girl who expressed her

wish to be exposed the positive side of Judaism, often absent in Israeli media today, saying she knows she has a beautiful tradition, but has not yet had a chance to see it."

With a student body of more than 4,000, Landa says that he and his wife, who are the parents of a young son and a new baby daughter, are in the midst of a busy year. In addition to giving JLI-accredited courses, they are planning programs and reaching out to students who remain on campus for Shabbat. While Shabbat dinners have long been a staple of Chabad centers on college campuses in North America, they remain somewhat of a novelty in Israel, where many students commute to classes and eat at home with their families on Friday night.

Still, says Landa, there are always those who stay on and near campus, and there are the international students who live in dorms, especially in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, so "a big focus for our centers in Israel is Shabbat meals on campus every Friday night."

Rabbi Avi Weinstein, director of administration at Chabad on Campus International, looks forward to the continuing expansion of Chabad's campus activities worldwide. "Having new centers around the world—and offering programs and classes to thousands of additional young men and women—is a tremendous step towards accomplishing our goal of being a resource to Jewish students, wherever they are pursuing their secondary education."



Rabbi Berel and Esther Leah Grunblatt host some students for a Chanukah celebration

That permanent presence will now include Shabbat meals, classes, one-on-one Torah study, social events and holiday celebrations—whatever young adults need to add to their Judaism and their college experiences.

"We want to be their home away from home," says Esther Leah Grunblatt, 25 originally from Toronto. "A student on campus can be very lonely; it's a complicated time. They are trying to formulate their future and who they will be. We want to reach out to them, to be there for support in any way we can."

As one of seven children, it's something she knows well—listening to, talking with and offering support to others. It's also second nature for her husband, who's also one of 7.

For both of them it has been a life's ambition to join their many siblings, parents, uncles and aunts, who serve as Shluchim in dozens of Chabad centers in all parts of the world.

"This is a family tradition," says Grunblatt. "It's amazing that I get to join the club."

That club has certainly gotten a lot bigger.

'220 Campus Centers Worldwide and Growing'

"When today's college student moves into the workplace and ultimately creates a home, his or her success—and ours—will depend on the values they take with them," says philanthropist George Rohr, chairman of the Chabad on Campus International advisory board. "The positive, lifelong impact of the campus *shluchim* and *shluchos*—as teachers, mentors and role models, along with the 'homes away from home' that they create for a Jewish student—is incalculable."

As for the Grunblatts, who arrived in Cambridge with their 16-month-old baby Mendel and just welcomed their new baby daughter Chaya Mushka, their decision to work with students was not as much about numbers, about quantity, as it was about quality—about trying to get to meet, know and advise young Jewish men and women, wherever they are on university grounds.

"The Rebbe said that every person is a candle, and you only add—add to the light—until that light becomes a flame in itself," explains Rabbi Grubblatt.

His wife adds that college students "want the opportunity

N.Y. Times Offers Sunday Alternative for Sports Fans: A Trip to the Rebbe's Ohel

By Mordechai Lightstone

The Sunday sports section might not be where a reader would expect to see a conversation about the Ohel, the resting place of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory.

Yet in an article suggesting ways fans of the New York Jets and Giants football teams could escape their disappointment in their local teams' performance, *The New York Times* suggests something refreshingly different: "Make a pilgrimage" to the Reb-

be's resting place in Cambria Heights, Queens, writes metro reporter Sarah Maslin Nir, and engage in some prayer to G-d.



For sports fans looking to improve their teams' performance, the *New York Times* suggests: "Make a pilgrimage" to the Rebbe's resting place in Cambria Heights, Queens.

Promise Made by Little Hungarian Girl During WW11 Fulfilled

By Dovid Zaklikowski -
Budapest, Hungary

When Robert Rubinstein,



Robert Rubinstein (center), his wife Renee (right) and Kathy Takacs near the dedication to Magda Zelenka;

a Toronto businessman, had to fulfill the dying wish of a Hungarian Christian woman, he reached out to the Chabad rabbi in Budapest. He was holding the proceeds of the sale of two properties intended for Hungary's Jews.

In 2010, Magda Zelenka, originally from Hungary, came to Rubinstein's office. She had inherited her parents' home and her aunt's home in Mezökövesd, a town in northern Hungary, and wanted to see the profits benefit the Jews of her country.

Magda knew Rubinstein through his parents. Bill Rubinstein had owned apartment buildings in her childhood town, and Magda and her husband were the superintendents in one of them. The elder Rubinstein was, she said, always kind to her, and treated her father with kindness and respect.

Rubinstein knew the dark history of the Hungarians who collaborated with the Germans to exterminate Hungarian Jewry. His father was among the able-bodied men who had been shipped off to forced-labor camps by the Hungarians in 1944.

"I do not think of Hungary as my country," he told her, recalling his visit there in 1972 when "there was almost nothing going on Jewishly, and communism looked like it would last forever, hostile to any religion."

When he visited Mezökövesd—where he and Magda both had roots, he met only one Jew, a watchmaker.

A Heroic Child

Three months after her visit, a manila envelope landed on Rubinstein's desk. In it were two official title certificates from the Mezökövesd land office. The envelope remained on his desk, and soon got buried under a growing pile of more urgent matters.

Three years later Magda

wrote him a letter reminding him about the properties. By then, Magda had been diagnosed with lung cancer and was

preoccupied with the homes, speaking of little else. Rubinstein visited her in her Toronto home, promising her to sell the houses. But he wondered at the insistence of this dying Christian woman to see her money go to a Jewish cause.

Magda recalled the government restrictions on the local Jews during the Holocaust years. Her father ignored the laws and continued his contact with Jews, causing her own family no small measure of trouble. At some point, Magda's mother became furious with her father, berating him for destroying their family while befriend- ing the Jews.

Magda stood up to her mother. Her father, she told her mother boldly, is right. There is nothing wrong with the Jews. "They are people just like



The Obuda Synagogue.

us." And the little girl made a pledge, promising that when she grows up and inherits the family home, she will "give it to the Jews."

A Worthy Cause

In late 2013 the properties were sold and the money was transferred to a trust fund.

Rubinstein then reached out to Rabbi Shlomo Köves, the Chabad-Lubavitch Executive Rabbi of EMIH Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation. Köves suggested that the funds go to the renovations of Budapest's oldest standing

synagogue. The Obuda Synagogue, converted into a television studio after WWII, was returned to the Jewish community in 2010 and still much in need of repair.

The Toronto businessman was skeptical. He hadn't been to Hungary in years, and could not understand why Budapest's synagogue would warrant renovations. But when he finally visited last April, he found a thriving Jewish community. "To see now that the Jewish community is assertive and proud is astonishing," he said

Rubinstein would have loved to see the money go to the Jewish community in Mezökövesd, but it was destroyed. "It once upon a time had a nice Jewish community, but tragically that does not exist anymore," he says, his voice cracking with emotion. "If you want to do something for the Jewish community, it is only in Budapest."

During an April 2014 visit to the Obuda Synagogue, Rubinstein met a young Jewish mother studying Judaism and sending her child to the Chabad preschool. The woman told him of the recent Jewish revival among the young generation. Rubinstein was moved, and expressed gratitude to Chabad of Budapest. "It is very touching to see this happening once again in Hungary," he told lubavitch.com.

With anti-Semitism on the rise in Hungary, as in other European countries, Rabbi Köves

hopes that as the local community learns about Magda, a Christian child from Hungary who stood up for the Jews in her town, "they will learn from her actions, and be inspired that even a small child can stand up for the truth and for what is right."

Magda passed away this past August, but a plaque in the Budapest synagogue memorializes her: "In loving memory of Marton Lazar, a rare voice of righteousness in a world turned evil. Dedicated by his daughter, Magdolna Lazar Zelenka of Toronto, Canada."



Teffilin at Opening of Hyper Cacher in Paris

The Jewish supermarket in Paris attacked by an Islamic terrorist linked to the shootings at the Charlie Hebdo magazine in January re-opened last Sunday.

"We were stunned by the attack, but there was never any question that we would re-open," said one of the managers of the Hyper Cacher store, Laurent Mimoun.

Four Jewish men were murdered at the supermarket by gunman Amedy Coulibaly on January 9, two days after brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi massacred 12 people in an attack on the Charlie Hebdo offices.

French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve attended the reopening of the shop, which has been repaired after suffering heavy damage during the assault by special forces to kill

Cazeneuve said after visiting the scene of the drama, including the cold storage room where several hostages, including one with a baby, managed to hide from Coulibaly.

A new team of staff is working at the kosher supermarket, while employees who survived the bloody attack are free to decide "their new posting in one of the group's stores," the management said.

"With this reopening, we once again reaffirm that life will always be stronger than barbarity," the management of Hyper Cacher said in a statement.

Chabad Lubavitch Rabbis attended the opening, where they offered people to put on Tefilin at the entrance to the store. Shliach Rabbi Mendel Goldberg (Pictured), of Chabad of



Coulibaly and free the staff and shoppers he had taken hostage.

"You can see the layout... you see the difficulties there were in the intervention," Ca-

Playa del Carmen, Mexico, in Paris for a family wedding, attended the opening to show support, and help with the Tefilin Campaign.


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Murdered by Soviets in 1938, Jewish Activist's Gravesite Found

After years of digging through the files of the KGB—the communist state security agency formerly known as the NKVD—a mass grave with over a dozen Chabad-Lubavitch followers murdered at the hands of the Soviets in 1938, was located and marked with tombstone.



Rabbi Mendel Marosov

Today, Rabbi Mendel Marosov, 98, takes a break from studying a scholarly Jewish book to recall those days when his father and brother were taken away. “For many years we did not know what happened to father. The NKVD told us that

they cannot divulge any information about his whereabouts,” Morosov said. “We did not know that he was executed until many years later.”

Morosov's father Rabbi El-



Rabbi Elchanon Dov (Chonya)

chanon Dov (Chonya) served as the aide of the fifth and sixth Chabad Rebbes, respectively, Rabbi Shalom Dovber and Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn. Chonya was an activist for Judaism, working fearlessly under the noses of the Soviets until he was arrested in 1927 together with Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn. He remained in prison for three years.

Upon his release he settled

in St. Petersburg, then called Leningrad, and resumed his activities, organizing clandestine adult education classes in Jewish studies at night. The NKVD put out a warrant for his arrest and thus his life on the run began. To evade them, he changed his name to Duber Posner and disguised his appearance. But in 1938, at age 61, he was among at least a dozen leaders of the Chabad underground who were arrested, their fate unknown for years.

In 2008, with the family still in the dark, one of Morosov's great-grandchildren visited the city. He turned for help to Rabbi Ifrah Abramov, an educator in the local Chabad school. Abramov began searching the NKVD archives.

Since then he uncovered thousands of pages of testimony given by the victims during their interrogation. “He came to my home and presented me with the documents,” says the 98-year-old son. “I made one request: if he finds my father's gravesite, he should erect a tombstone.”

Abramov continued his search. In 2012 he learned that



The new tombstone at the location of the mass grave.

all those rounded up on that spring night in 1938 were summarily executed. They were buried in the Levasovskoj government cemetery. Now the date of their deaths was finally known.

When Abramov came to the cemetery to find out where the group was buried, he was

brushed off. He persisted negotiating an obstacle course of bureaucratic red tape, until, in the spring of 2014, cemetery clerks pulled out old maps and Abramov found the exact location they were buried.

Recently, permission was granted to erect a marker on the site, a development late in coming for the nonagenarian rabbi who has difficulty getting around inside his home.

“I myself can't travel to the cemetery. But at least now my family can go and pay their respects. There is finally a matzevah, [tombstone] and for this I am grateful.”

The marker includes the names of the other activists who were killed and buried there that night: Rabbis Pinchus Althaus, Shmuel Nemoitin, Yitzchok Raskin, Meir Friedman, Yehshayahu Gold, Dovber Koznitzov, Feivish Esterin, Shaul Katzenelenbogen, Yaakov Golobchik and Elchonon Epstein.

International Arrivals: 8 Torah Scrolls Dedicated to Victims of Terror in Israel

From murdered teens to fallen soldiers, responding to death with the 'Tree of Life'

By Carin M. Smilk

Eyal Yifrach, Naftali Frenkel and Gilad Shaar will not be forgotten. In so many ways, the worldwide Jewish community has made it a point over the last year and a half to remember the names and the lives of these three Israeli teenagers kidnapped and murdered by terrorists last June.

The tributes have run the gamut—from the Jewish National

newborn son after them.

Also in Brooklyn, the Beis Yisroel Torah Gemach—a project of Chabad-Lubavitch World Headquarters in New York—immediately got to work getting three Torahs named in honor of the teens and deployed on loan to different Chabad Houses.

“In Jewish tradition, dedicating a Sefer Torah in memory of the deceased is a most fitting tribute,” said Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky, executive director of Merkos Suite 302. “The Torah is called ‘a Tree of Life,’ and

will carry on, sharing holiness and unity amongst the Jewish people.”

A small Torah went to Chabad of the Big Island in Kailua Kona, Hawaii. Two larger Torahs have been sent to Chabad of Olney in Maryland and to Chabad-Lubavitch of Solano County in Vacaville, California. The black-velvet covers edged in gold fringe include the names of all three boys (and their fathers' first names), as they would have been called to the Torah: Eyal ben Uri, Naftali ben Avraham and Gilad ben Ofir.

Rabbi Zaklos, director of Chabad Solano County says his Torah arrived shortly before Rosh Hashanah, and that “it was very, very meaningful” when he presented it to the community. He says he saw tears in some people's eyes when they heard that it honored the three Israeli teens.

A congregant also told him: “I feel like this is the children's lives coming alive through this Torah and in this community.”

The Chabad House—about a half-hour from Sacramento in northern California—serves a few hundred Jews, according to the rabbi, who had been using a borrowed Torah for services. When a regular attendee researched the possibilities of

getting a Torah on loan and discovered the Torah Gemach online, he says “at first, I couldn't believe it. It was too good to be true.”

“We are a young Chabad House,” he explains, “and we weren't in the position to purchase a Torah. Plus, we were in the midst of a campaign to buy a building,” which, in fact, they did.

Plans are underway for the writing of Chabad of Solano's own permanent Sefer Torah.

Another Torah—in honor of the 66 Israel Defense Forces soldiers who lost their lives in Israel's summer war with Hamas in Gaza—was commissioned and sent to Chabad Lubavitch of Missoula, Mont., co-directed by Rabbi Berry and Shayna Nash. They serve students at the University of Montana and the local Jewish community.

The rabbi's father, Leibish Nash, traveled from New York to Montana with the Torah in tow, literally, in a backpack. It came in time for the *brit milah* w/zof the Nashes' baby son, Mendel, on Aug. 21 (they also have a 2-year-old daughter, Riva), which was the first *minyan* they had since establishing the Chabad center in May.

The war ended five days later, with a cease-fire on Aug. 26.

“To us, the Torah is very special and meaningful,” says Rabbi Berry Nash. “It makes us feel like we aren't missing out on the special *brachos* [blessings] that we can elicit from on high. “We try to arrange a *minyan* once monthly,” he notes. “We don't get one every time, but it's coming along. We'll get there soon.”

The donor of the above four Torahs, who would like to remain anonymous, is from New York's Upper West Side.

According to Bentzion Chanowitz, who runs the Torah Gemach, four more Torahs are getting ready to be sent to Chabad centers that need them. These are in honor of the rabbis murdered in mid-November by Palestinian terrorists in a synagogue in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Har Nof: Rabbi Moshe Twersky, 59; Rabbi Kalman Levine, 55; Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Goldberg, 68; and Rabbi Aryeh Kupinsky, 43. “The lives lost in Israel in the second half of 2014 were beyond tragic,” says Chanowitz, “but their names have been connected to Torahs now being used and read by Jews in different parts of the world on a regular basis. We thank the donors and honor the families.”



These Torahs were commissioned in honor of the three Israeli teenage boys abducted and killed by Palestinians last June. Holding them, from left, are Yankel Yankelewitz; Bentzion Chanowitz, who runs the Torah Gemach, a project of Chabad Lubavitch World Headquarters; Yerachmiel Paskin; and sofer (Torah scribe) Rabbi Daniel Dovid Dahan.

Fund dedicating a forest of trees and creating gardens in memory of the boys to a family in Brooklyn, N.Y., naming their

through gathering communities and reading these Torahs dedicated in their names, the lives of Eyal, Gilad and Naftali

Ukrainian City Becomes a Haven for Jews Fleeing War

Like all conflicts, the one in eastern Ukraine has driven people from their homes. As of mid-February, over a million Ukrainians were refugees within their own country, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, which

is thriving, with an estimated 50,000 members.

Chabad runs a network of schools, synagogues and a host of social services in the city. That's thanks in part to the patronage of the region's Jewish governor, Ihor Kolomoisky, one

pro-Russian separatists. He was out fighting when Friedman visited, but his family posed for the camera. A local Jewish newspaper, Shabbat Shalom, profiled him, writing: "The exotic appearance of this slender, richly-bearded man leaves nobody unmoved. In a kippa, he just looks like a Jew; in a felt hat, like a Lubavitch Chasid; in camouflage and a helmet, like—forgive us—a Talib; and in a khaki cap, like Fidel Castro."

Some of the refugees have found shelter with local families or had the money to rent



ritories, Mikhail is even more worried about his father and his fiancée's family, who are stuck in Donetsk.

Among the more enterprising members of the Dnipropetrovsk Jewish community are Sasha Chumak and Alik Krasniy, who run an electrical maintenance and heating systems shop. Sasha was a Ukrainian paratrooper and took part in a peacekeeping mission during

local doctors in treating war injuries, and buys medicines and supplies for the wounded.

Yet another of the community's colorful characters is Leonid Krasnopolsky, a tailor from Donetsk. Imprisoned by pro-Russian rebels on charges of spying for Ukraine, he managed to get out after only five days. Now he runs a company selling Ukrainian-themed t-shirts and other clothes across the country. He says he spends a third of his earnings on protective gear for soldiers.

Two of the oldest refugees are Fira and Lyova, a couple who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Feb. 5. Fleeing the fighting last year brought on haunting memories of a previous evacuation—in 1941, when they fled Lviv in western Ukraine in the face of the advancing Nazi army. Last summer they escaped first from Lugansk, another rebel-held city, to Donetsk, and when the fighting followed them, came to Dnipropetrovsk. Their son and his family have remained behind.

Fira and Lyova remember World War II and are at a loss about the current conflict—how can brothers kill brothers, destroy such beautiful cities, for no reason whatsoever? World War II made sense, they say; this one doesn't.

However, moving to Dnipropetrovsk has brought them at least one moment of bitter-sweet joy. After nearly 60 years of secular marriage—the only kind allowed during the Soviet Union—they finally had their Jewish wedding ceremony just a few weeks ago.



The Menorah, the Jewish community center of Dnipropetrovsk, said by some to be the biggest in the world.

tracks such figures worldwide. Among them, two groups face a particularly complicated life.

One is Crimean Tatars, a Muslim community with a long history of being repressed by Russia. Thousands of them have fled Crimea since Russia annexed it last year. The other is Jews, who have endured their own long history of anti-Semitism in the region, which the conflict with Russia has stirred up again.

Photographer Misha Friedman travelled to Ukraine to visit members of both communities. In this story, he looks at the Jews who have fled to Dnipropetrovsk, roughly 150 miles (240 km) from the rebel-held city of Donetsk.

The city's Jewish community has a history as tormented as those anywhere in Europe. Most fled the Nazis in 1941; all those who didn't were exterminated. Of those who returned after the Soviets took over, thousands more died after being drafted into the Red

of Ukraine's richest oligarchs, who was profiled by Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz under the headline "Is this man the most powerful Jew in the world?"

Kolomoisky co-funded the building of the Chabad Jewish community center, said to be either Europe's or the world's biggest. It's built in the shape of—and named for—the menorah, the seven-branched candelabra. Inside the \$70 million building, completed in 2012, are offices, restaurants, a hotel and youth hostel, luxury apartments, an Israeli consulate, a cultural center, and a museum. At its feet is the historic "Golden Rose" synagogue.

Despite the fears about an anti-Semitic resurgence, Friedman found a resilient community where the refugees from further east are finding ways to fit in. Some have devised rather enterprising responses to their situation.

Asher Cherkassky, who left Crimea with his family and came to Dnipropetrovsk after



Shterna Sara-Cherkassky, whose husband Asher fights against pro-Russian separatists as a volunteer in the Dnipro Battalion, with her children.

their own homes. Marianna, a high-school student, left Donetsk in September and is staying with a friend's family in Dnipropetrovsk. She hopes to return home soon. Her mother and grandfather are still in Donetsk, though her mother tries to visit often.

Others, such as Mikhail, a 24-year-old translator, and his family, have been put up in the community center's retirement home. Because Ukrainian authorities have recently introduced a permit system to go in and out of the rebel-held ter-

the Yugoslav wars in the early 1990s. Combining his knowledge of war and trade he modified a potbellied stove to make it more efficient for soldiers. With Alik, he produces such stoves and sells them to the Ukrainian army. They named the stoves nitsakhon, the Hebrew word for "victory."

Volunteers from the Jewish community are regular visitors at the local hospitals, which receive many wounded Ukrainian soldiers from the front lines. The community has brought surgeons from Israel to train



Rabbi Shmuel Kaminezki hosts other religious leaders at a Holocaust Remembrance day event in Dnipropetrovsk. (Misha Friedman)

Army. And most of those who remained emigrated to Israel after the Soviet Union fell.

Yet today the community

Russia invaded, prides himself on being—so he says—the only Orthodox Jew in the Ukrainian volunteer battalions fighting the



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Dear Rebbby

By Rabbi Aron Moss



Don't Let Rice Get Between Us

I am Ashkenazi (Jew of Eastern European descent), and my wife is Sefardi (an Oriental Jew). She grew up eating rice on Pesach, which my family custom would never allow. Every Pesach we have the same discussion: how can it be that one group of Jews can eat rice on Pesach and another group can't? Aren't we all the same religion? Isn't this an example of how the Torah can be interpreted in so many ways, and there is no one true Judaism?

Answer:

Actually, when you compare the way Ashkenazi and Sefardi Jews celebrate Pesach, you will be astounded not by the differences, but by the similarities. The discrepancies are so minor and external that they just prove the rule - we are one people with one Torah.

Jews are forbidden by the Torah to eat or even own leavened products on Pesach. This means any product made from the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, rye, oats), other than Matzah, cannot be eaten or be in your possession for the eight days of Passover. The Jews of Eastern Europe took on an extra stringency, and forbade rice and several other foods on Pesach. Although rice is not one of the five grains, it was often grown together with wheat, and the two could become intermingled. Also, rice can be ground into flour and then confused with wheat flour. For these reasons rice was not eaten on Pesach by European Jews.

The Jews of the Orient however did not take on this custom. Perhaps the conditions of growing and storing those products in their lands did not warrant this extra precaution. This means that the Seder menu of a Jewish family from Morocco or Yemen will vastly differ from the fare served at a table of German or Hungarian Jews. The former will eat rice, peas, beans and corn, the latter will not.

But that's just the menu. If you look at every other aspect of the Seder, they are almost identical from one community to another. To illustrate this, imagine the following mind experiment:

Take a 9th century Persian Jew, and transport him through time and space to 19th century Poland. After traversing the globe and jumping a thousand years forward, he arrives in a

time and a land that are totally foreign to him. He walks the streets in a daze, completely lost and out of place.

But take him to a Seder, and he would feel completely at home. His host family may look different in colour and dress to his own, they may eat Ashkenazi foods that are unfamiliar to his Sefardi palate, but the Seder itself would be exactly the same as his family Seder back home. He would hear the children ask the same four questions that his own children ask him. He would eat the same Matzah and bitter herbs, drink the same four cups of wine, read the same prayers and biblical quotes. Even the songs, while sung to different tunes, would have the same Hebrew lyrics.

Most importantly, he would hear the exact same story, the story every Jewish family has told every year for over three thousand years, the story of our common ancestors who were slaves in Egypt until G-d set them free.

This is nothing short of amazing. Two thousand years of exile has not weakened our inner connection. Dispersal across the globe has not loosened our bonds of shared history and united destiny. With all the fragmentation and factionalism that we all complain about, we are still one people. This is felt at Pesach more than ever.

Rather than focusing on the superficial disparities between communities, look at our internal connection. We are all telling the same story. G-d took us out of Egypt to make us one nation, united by the Torah, our common history and our common goal. Some eat rice, some don't, and it matters not. We are one family, the children of Israel.

Is Judaism Patronising to Women?

I have often heard it said that Judaism believes that women are more spiritual than men. This is supposed to explain why men have more religious obligations than women - men need these things to become closer to G-d, women are there already. But do we really believe that? Is it not just a patronising way to avoid the question of the different gender roles in Judaism?

Answer:

I remember as a child being told that men and women are equal. I had a big problem with this. I asked, "If men and woman are equal, why do men

and women never compete with each other in sports? You never see a man playing against a woman in tennis, or women's soccer teams facing men's, or a mixed gender 100 metre sprint. If we are all equal, why can't we compete together?"

The answer I received was unsatisfying. "Men are on average stronger physically than women. It would not be fair for them to compete against each other in sports which require bodily strength, because men would always win. But in every other way, men and women are equal.

This did not sit well with me. If men are superior to women in physical strength, but equal in all else, then men and women are not equal. Men have an edge. Unless there is some other area of human endeavour in which women are superior, we are not equal.

This bothered me for years. Until I learnt Judaism's attitude to women.

Women are more soulful than men. While men may excel in physical prowess, women are far ahead when it comes to spiritual strength. Women are more sensitive to matters of the soul, more receptive to ideas of faith, more drawn to the divine than men. The feminine soul has an openness to the abstract and a grasp of the intangible that a male soul can only yearn for. This is why G-d told Abraham, the first Jewish man, "Whatever Sarah your wife tells you, listen to her voice." She was the greater prophet, her soul more intuitive than his.

When I first heard this idea, it suddenly all made sense. There is indeed a balance between men and women. Men have stronger bodies, women have stronger souls.

Of course there are exceptions. Some women could beat any guy in an arm wrestle. And some men are more spiritually attuned than the women around them. But for the most part, men have bigger muscles, women have deeper feelings.

The Torah gives men more physical mitzvos, to tame the body and give the soul extra power. Women don't need this help. Because although men can jump higher in the air, women can reach higher into the heavens.

A Sports Fan's Crisis of Faith

I wanted to ask you for your opinion on the topic of sport and G-d. My husband is quickly losing his faith in G-d due to his team not winning.

Every time his team loses, he loses his faith more and more. I want to try and give him a way of looking at it differently and rather than blaming G-d for another losing game, blaming the players, and perhaps just watching less sport???

Answer:

How about telling him this. It is not a rational reaction to lose faith because your team is losing. Rather than switch beliefs, it would make more sense to switch teams.

After all, surely fans on both sides of any game are praying for their team to win. Only one of those prayers can be answered affirmatively. If yours is losing, it doesn't mean G-d isn't there, just maybe He is on the other side. So if G-d is with them, shouldn't you be too?

This argument will of course have absolutely no effect on him. I can't imagine a real sports fan exchanging loyalties just because his team keeps losing. Well, that's what having faith means. No matter what happens, we only have one G-d, and we stick with Him. In fact, the very word for faith in Hebrew is Emunah, which actually means loyalty. Just like a fan never switches sides no matter what, a believer is loyal to G-d come what may.

In a way, it is wonderful that the biggest tragedy in his life is his team losing. May it always be that way. But he needs to maintain perspective and disentangle his faith from his fandom. Sport is recreation, diversion, relaxation, entertainment. If it is bringing such angst and frustration, it is not serving its purpose. Sport is about playing, not praying.

I don't know if you will succeed in convincing him to watch less sport. But maybe he can become less invested in it. His emotional and spiritual energies should be saved for his real team, the team that truly needs him - his family, his community, his people and his G-d.

The Atheist Telescope

How can a rational thinking person believe in G-d, when there is absolutely no evidence for his existence? Today we have x-ray, radar, satellites, infrared photography, ultrasound imaging, gamma-ray telescopes and CCTV, and

yet we still have found no trace of G-d. If he is supposed to be everywhere, why is he nowhere to be seen? My logic says, if you are nowhere, you don't exist...

Answer:

Being everywhere doesn't make you easy to find. On the contrary, logic says if you are everywhere, it's as if you're nowhere. A bit like our fridge.

As our family grew we needed more fridge space, so we bought an old fridge online. It was a bargain. We soon found out why. When we plugged it in it started humming quite loudly. At first we thought we couldn't live with this constant, monotonous buzz coming from the kitchen. But in a day or two we didn't even notice it anymore.

You can only hear a noise if that noise sometimes goes silent. But if it's always there, it's like it's not there at all. Ask our kids what that buzzing noise is coming from the fridge, and they wouldn't even know what you are talking about. When you live with a noisy fridge, buzzing is silence.

It's the same with G-d. We live in a reality where the buzz of G-d is everywhere. There is no place devoid of Him, no moment when He is absent. So of course we can't detect Him. You can only detect the presence of something if you can detect its absence. The very definition of finding something is knowing where it is, but for that you have to know where it isn't. As the Baal Shem Tov taught, G-d is all and all is G-d. There is nowhere that he isn't. So we never see Him, because we are always looking right at Him.

This leads to an interesting conclusion. It's not that you can't see G-d. You actually can't miss Him. It just depends how you are looking. Put down your telescope and look at your life. You'll see He's been right there all along.

Are Rabbis Too Ethnocentric?

Dave Asks:

The problem with rabbis like you is your narrow view of the world. You always talk about the Jewish future, Jewish continuity, Jews marrying Jews, having Jewish children. What about the rest of humanity? Why do we have to always divide between people? Can't we

Dear Rebby



speaking of humans rather than Jews?

Rebbe answers:

You have a good point. Maybe I should broaden my perspective and be concerned about more global issues and not so pre-occupied with Jewish particularism. So if you don't mind, I would like to hear your point of view on one such issue: The hairy-nosed wombat.

I have been approached by an organisation that is dedicated to saving endangered species. They are campaigning to save the hairy-nosed wombat of northern Queensland, which is on the verge of extinction. They say if we don't do something soon the wombats will be gone forever.

Do you think this is a good cause? I could write about it in my weekly article but am not sure if it is worthy of promotion. This is not a Jewish issue. Should it really bother me if there are no more hairy-nosed wombats?

Dave replies:

Now you're talking. I would love to see a rabbi promote conservation and eco-awareness. And by the way, it is a Jewish issue! If the hairy-nosed wombat is lost, we all lose. Every species is an integral part of the whole ecosystem. I would much rather you wrote about something like that than the usual myopic Jewish stuff...

Rebbe responds:

I have no doubt that the hairy-nosed wombat makes an important contribution to the world - otherwise G-d would not have created it. But I happen to think that the Jewish people are at least as worthy of preservation as the hairy-nosed wombat.

While the contribution wombats make to the world may not be obvious, the Jewish contribution is. From Moses to Maimonides to Marx, from Philo to Freud to Forbes, Jews as individuals and as a community have given much to the world, and I don't think we have run out of ideas. I think we

have more to give.

This is not to put down any other nation and their achievements. Just as the attempt to save the hairy-nosed wombat is not insulting to any other animal, so too the desire to continue the Jewish legacy of four thousand years in no way belittles the gifts of other people.

My work is to try to keep Jewish souls Jewish, because I believe Judaism is an idea that is yet to have its time, and you can't have Judaism without Jews. So I will continue to try to preserve Jews, whether or not they are hairy-nosed.

Why Stones on a Grave?

I am going to visit my grandmother's grave, and was planning to buy a bunch of her favourite flowers. But I have noticed that Jewish graves don't have bouquets, only stones laid on them. Is there anything wrong with placing flowers on a grave?

Answer:

The custom to place a stone on a grave is an ancient one. By doing so we are symbolically adding to the gravestone, building up the monument that honours the departed. Placing flowers on a grave is not the Jewish custom.

Flowers wither and die. Stones remain unchanged. While flowers are a beautiful gift to the living, they mean nothing to the dead. In death, the body which is ephemeral and temporary is gone, but the eternal soul remains. The body, like a flower, blossoms and then fades away, but the soul, like a solid stone, lives on forever.

In the world of truth, the place we all go after life on earth, what counts is the lasting impact we had on the world. It is our spiritual achievements, not material gains, that remain beyond the grave. The money we make, the holidays we go on, the food we eat and the games we play, these are all flowers that mean nothing when we die. But the good deeds we do, the love we show to others, the light we bring to the world, these are eternal stones of enduring worth.

If you want to honour your grandmother, take the money you would have spent on flowers for her and give it to charity in her memory. And take a modest stone that cost you nothing, and place it on her grave, to tell her that though she is gone, the impact she had on you is everlasting.

Death Penalty Today?

I would love to embrace Judaism again, but there is something I can't get over. I was observant as a child, keeping Shabbos and kosher and all the laws. But then once, when I was a teenager, a neighbour offered me a meat sandwich. It wasn't kosher, and I knew it. But I was hungry. In a weak moment, I ate the sandwich. And then... nothing happened. I was not struck down by lightning, I didn't get sick or collapse, the sky didn't fall. I realised that these laws actually mean nothing. So I stopped keeping Shabbos, and from there it was a matter of time before I lost any guilt and dropped religion entirely. That was twenty years ago. Doesn't my experience prove that the Torah isn't true?

Answer:

On the contrary, your experience proves just how true the Torah is. The consequence for breaking the Torah's rules is not the sky falling or being struck down by lightning. The consequence of sin is indifference. When you do bad and feel nothing, that is the greatest punishment there can be.

What happened to you is exactly what the Talmud says: "One sin leads to another." When you do something wrong, a layer of ice forms over your soul. You become less spiritually sensitive, less in touch with G-d, you become cold and apathetic. The feeling of indifference just makes the next transgression easier, which leads to a cycle of spiritual degeneration and disconnect.

This is the deeper meaning of the biblical death penalty for sins. The death is an internal one, your soul loses its life force, your spirit is cut off, your heart goes stone cold. When you eat non-kosher or break Shabbos, something changes inside you. The fact you feel nothing is the proof of how deep it is. Your soul is numb.

But your soul can always be revived. For the Talmud teaches, just as one sin leads to another, so one mitzvah leads to another. If one sandwich can freeze your spirit, one good deed can bring your soul back to life, by melting the ice of indifference and allowing you to feel again. The first step is hard, but the next one is easier.

You have proven the numbing power of breaking the Torah's rules. Now prove the reviving power of keeping them, and do just one mitzvah.

Four Ways to use Your Head

Continued from page 1

instructions-- any cure the doctor pre-
scribes will be of limited effectiveness..."

The tefillin are a pair of leather boxes, one worn on the arm opposite the heart, and the second worn on the head above the hair-line aligned with the space between the eyes. Inside the boxes are parchment scrolls inscribed with four Torah sections (Exodus 13:1-10; Exodus 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21) containing the fundamentals of the Jewish faith.

The arm and the head are the two basic instruments of life: action and knowledge. The tefillin represent the "binding" and dedication of these instruments of life to serve G-d.

Numerous laws govern the making of the tefillin and the manner in which they are worn. The Chassidic masters teach that each Torah law has both a body and a soul -- a practical instruction and an inner significance. So the laws of tefillin can be understood on two levels: as a set of instructions on how to make and wear tefillin; and as a thesis on the nature of mind and deed, their relationship to each other and the manner in which they serve our mission in life.

One of the laws of tefillin concerns the order in which they are put on and removed: first we bind the tefillin on the arm, then we place the tefillin on the head. In removing the tefillin, the order is reversed: first the head-tefillin are removed, and then the arm-tefillin. This law is derived from the verse, "and they shall be as tefillin between your eyes."¹ Emphasizing the plural form of the word vehayu--"and they shall be"--the Talmud understands the verse to imply, "at any time that there is tefillin between your eyes, there shall be both."²

In other words, there may be times and situations in which you're wearing only the arm-tefillin--i.e., before you put on the head-tefillin or after you removed it --but never a time or situation in which the head-tefillin are being worn without the arm-tefillin.

What does this tell us about the "head" and the "arm"? Many things, but let us note four basic truths about the interplay between mind and action:

- 1) We need both. We cannot say, "I trust G-d. I'll follow His commands. I don't need to understand." Nor can we say, "The important thing is to understand what G-d is telling us with all these commandments about Himself, about life in general. Actually doing them--well, if it does something for you, fine, but that's not what it's about." Our relationship with G-d should encompass our entire being--mind as well as deed, action as well as thought. That's why there are two tefillin--one for the arm and one for the head.
- 2) Doing comes first. The basis and foundation of our lives are the mitzvot--the divine commandments. Saying, "I won't do it until I fully understand" is like refusing to take the medicine the doctor has prescribed until you understand exactly how antibiotics are made and how they neutralize bacteria, or refusing to breathe until you've studied how the lungs function and why your body requires oxygen... That's why the arm-tefillin are put on first, before the head-tefillin.
- 3) Commitment and deed transcend understanding. Even after we've studied and understood, to the full extent that we are able, there will still be times and situations when we don't fully understand and need to simply obey and trust the wisdom of our Creator. We need to be able to say to ourselves, "This is what I understand, and it has made my doing that much more meaningful. But there's more to life than what I can understand. If I stop here, I'm cutting myself out from the infinite truth that lies beyond the humanly knowable truth." This is implied by the law that the head-tefillin are removed first, indicating that will be times when the arm-tefillin remain on their own after the head-tefillin have been applied.
- 4) There cannot be knowledge without action. This is expressed by the axiom, "At any time that there is tefillin between your eyes, there shall be both." While it may be the case that we are enwrapped in the arm-tefillin without the head-tefillin (either because we haven't yet attained full understanding, or because we've advanced beyond it) the reverse is never the case. In other words, there's no such thing as "theoretical knowledge." Thought that is uncoupled from action understands nothing at all.

Knowledge adds depth to our doing. Doing is what makes our knowledge know.

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WEEKLY CLASSES

SUNDAY

7:45 AM	TANYA	RABBI YARMUSH
8:00 AM	CHASSIDIC THOUGHT	RABBI GANSBURG
10:00 AM	PARSHAT HASHAVUA	RABBI SCHOCHET
10:00 AM	LIKKUTEI SICHOS	RABBI GANSBURG
11:00 AM	TALMUD (AVODA ZARA)	RABBI SCHOCHET
11:15 AM	TALMUD (KERISUS)	RABBI SPALTER
7:00 PM	CHASSIDIC DISCOURSES	RABBI GANSBURG
8:30 PM	SHULCHAN ARUCH	RABBI CHAIKIN

MONDAY

11:00 AM	THE JOY OF JUDAISM	RABBI SPALTER
7:45 PM	THE WEEKLY TORAH REVIEW	RABBI GANSBURG
1 HR BEFORE MINCHA	TALMUD (TA'ANIS)	RABBI SCHOCHET

TUESDAY

11:30 AM	TORAH STUDIES - PARSHA	RABBI GANSBURG
8:00 PM	TALMUD (CHULIN)	RABBI SPALTER

WEDNESDAY

12:00 PM	THE JEWISH LEARNING INSTITUTE	RABBI GANSBURG
1 HR BEFORE MINCHA	TALMUD (TA'ANIS)	RABBI SCHOCHET

THURSDAY

12:30 PM	A TASTE OF CHASSIDUS (HEBREW)	RABBI GANSBURG
8:00 PM	IN DEPTH PARSHA STUDY	RABBI Z.A. GROSSBAUM
8:00-9:30 PM	CHAVRUSA-LEARN WITH YOUR PARTNER	
8:15-9:15 PM	CHASSIDIC DISCOURSES (ADVANCED)	RABBI GANSBURG

SHABBOS

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

DAILY CLASSES

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

From Kuwaiti Arab to Israeli Jew

Continued from page 16

My father's parents died before I was born."

Dr. Block said gently, "If that's the case, then by Muslim law you're Muslim, and by Jewish law you're a Jew. A Jew can convert 10 times and he'll still be a Jew, and by Jewish law religion is transferred by the mother, which makes your mother Jewish, and makes you a Jew."

I was completely dumbfounded. Memories flooded into my mind—my grandmother, the "evil Jews," mosque sermons, Israeli TV . . .

I ran home and told my roommate, who said, "So that makes you a 'Mus-Jew.'" I was not amused.

I went up to my room, called my mom, and told her what happened. She told me to stay away from Dr. Block. But I called my grandmother, and we spoke for quite some time, and she told me about her family and younger brother who died in the early days of the establishment of Israel. I finally mustered the courage to ask her, "Tata, are you Jewish?" I never heard my grandmother as distressed in all my life. She cried and told me more stories about her family and how Jews and Arabs used to be friends.

I decided not to pursue the idea that I was a Jew, as I was finishing university and this wasn't a topic worth upsetting my family over. I did speak on the phone once with Dr. Block and met with his son-in-law, Chabad Rabbi Lazer Gurkow, who was a rabbi of a congregation close by. He recommended books to read and mentioned his synagogue.

One evening, while rollerblading on the street, I suddenly fell to the ground, although the street was smooth and there was no visible cause for the fall. I immediately felt that it was a "push" from up above. My right wrist was sprained and bandaged, and I couldn't go to work for some time.

That Saturday morning, I remembered that Jews went to synagogue on Saturdays. I contemplated going to Dr. Block's synagogue to check it out, but I was hesitant, thinking, "I look so Middle Eastern; I'll probably scare people off." I decided to go anyway. I looked up the address and called a cab, not knowing it would be the last time I would ride in a cab on Shabbat.

When I arrived at the shul, I thought, I'll just go in, how bad could it be? If worst comes to worst, I won't come back again. I opened the door, and there stood an Indian gentleman, who handed me a kippah and greeted me with "Shabbat Shalom." Cool, I thought. I looked around for Dr. Block, and found him standing all the way in the back, with a book in his hands. He greeted me with the same reassuring, warm smile and said,

"Good Shabbos."

I asked him, "What are you reading?"

He replied, "I like to learn on Shabbos."

"Aren't you done studying by now?" I asked, thinking to myself that he must be retired at this age.

He answered, "Even if I would live another lifetime, I wouldn't be done learning." That sentence didn't register until much later in life.

The congregation was a mix of all ages, and everyone was responding to the rabbi enthusiastically. I was handed a prayerbook, and someone was calling out the page numbers. Soon I found myself reading a song that I'd be reading every Shabbat from then on:

"Ve-shamru v'nei Yisrael et ha-Shabbat. . . . "And the Children of Israel observed the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath for their generations an eternal covenant. Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever, that in six days did G-d make the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

I didn't understand Hebrew, but between my Arabic and the English translation, I could understand the words. "Between Me and the Children of Israel it is a sign forever." It was true. By then, my tears were streaming down.

I met a few people over Kiddush, including an African Fala-sha gentleman and an Egyptian couple who, when they learned of my birthplace, asked me in Arabic, "Do you speak Arabic?" I felt like saying, "Shush, the Jews are here!"

After the Kiddush, Dr. Block invited me to his home for lunch. I wasn't used to accepting too much from people, so I politely declined, but he said, "We're having several guests, and one more won't be a bother. My wife makes delicious chicken."

I gave him a big smile and told him it would be my pleasure.

At Dr. Block's home, there were around 10 people at that table, a mix of students and professionals. The conversation was lively, and people were encouraged to ask challenging questions. Later, we read parts of a story about a queen named Esther and how she strived to save her people from an evil man who wanted to destroy the Jews. It reminded me of the systematic anti-Jewish indoctrination I grew up with. We didn't finish the story of Esther, and I wondered whether the Jews were saved in the end.

Dr. Block was a great host. He walked me to the door and thanked me for coming over. I told him it felt like I'd done this before—it was weird. He said, "It's not hard to believe. Every Jew is born with a little Torah

and a little menorah inside." He nudged me with his shoulder and said, "All it takes is for another Jew to bump into him to light it up."

When I got home, I waited until after sunset to turn my computer on, like I was advised, and I started searching until I found "The Book of Esther." I devoured the story until the end, sighing with relief that G-d had saved the Jews from the plot of those who wanted their destruction. I felt a sense of ownership of my newfound Jewish identity, and decided I wanted to experience Shabbat some more. I spoke with my employer, and I started observing Shabbat regularly.

A few months later, I moved to Toronto for further university studies. I started going to shul there too, and I studied at the Lubavitch Yeshivah every Tuesday to learn more about my newfound background. The more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. I also taught myself Hebrew, and became more observant of Shabbat laws. Life started to have more meaning for me, and I felt comfortable telling my friends and family I was a Jew.

Initially, my family was tolerant of my Jewish involvement, viewing it as a passing phase. Then my mother started to become more religious as a Muslim. I learned that she had started to cover her hair after my aunt died in a car accident. As she became more observant, she started attacking me with the same words and phrases Muslims use against Jews. My mother's extreme religious level clashed with my father's anti-religious beliefs, and they eventually divorced.

I didn't fare well with my father, either. Once, while we were discussing how terrorism and crime was becoming out of control in the Middle East, I asked, "Why is the life of an Israeli soldier fighting for his people worth less than that of a terrorist civilian aiming to kill and maim others because he was told to do so by a fanatic?" My dad himself had taught me that fanatics brainwash children into becoming suicide bombers, but when the topic involved Jews, the narrative suddenly changed. He called me a Zionist and threatened to remove me from his will.

One day, a rabbi told me that since I didn't have physical proof of my Jewish claims, and my family had been outside of Jewish life for a few generations, I'd have to convert. I had a difficult time wrapping my head around the idea of conversion. My family didn't want to speak with me, I had shed the skin I'd worn for the past 26 years of my life to become a completely different person—and now I had to convert? I reminded myself that deep inside, the main reason I wanted to be Jewish was to marry a Jewish girl and continue the family line.

I decided to take the plunge and went to the Beit Din in Toronto. We started the process, and later I was advised to spend some time at a Yeshivah in Is-

rael. I went to Israel and fell in love with the land and the people I had been told were "animals" and "killers." I found a genuine family of Jews from all around the world. Jews of all colors and nationalities, Jews who were creative, innovative, accepting and loving . . . just like the first Jew I encountered at UWO.

After three years of learning Jewish law and philosophy, I was invited for an interview with the Beit Din of Rav Nissim Karelitz. I was tested thoroughly on various topics of law, and I passed flawlessly. I was officially accepted as a member of the Jewish people. My dream finally came true—I could marry and have Jewish children, as Jewish as everyone else.

On August 6, 2014—the day right after Tisha b'Av—I made my way to a Second Temple-period mikvah by the Western Wall in preparation for my wedding ceremony.

The Bridge Spanning the Infinite Abyss

Continued from page 2

Temptation is sweet at the beginning, but bitter at the end. But human nature is such that an individual may disregard the bitter consequences because of the initial gratification.

We see, for example, that children, and very often adults also, may be warned that overindulgence in certain foods will be harmful to them and make them sick later on, so that for a period of time they might not be able to eat anything at all; yet, they may nevertheless reject all restraints to gratify their immediate appetite or passion. In a like manner, G-d has given us the "yoke" of Torah and mitzvot, telling us that whether one understands them or not, or whatever the temptation may be, one must carry out G-d's commandments unquestioningly.

Limitless Blessings

There is a further point, and this is the most essential aspect of the concept of the yoke of the Torah and mitzvot. It is that although, as mentioned before, the Torah and mitzvot have been given for the benefit of man, both in this life and in eternal life, there is an infinitely greater quality with which G-d has endowed the Torah and mitzvot. This is the quality of uniting man with G-d, the created with the Creator, who would otherwise have nothing in common. For, by giving man a set of mitzvot to carry out in his daily life, G-d has made it possible for man thereby to attach himself to his Creator, and transcend the limitations of a limited being, living in a limited world. The Torah and mitzvot constitute the bridge spanning the infinite abyss separating the Creator from the created, enabling the human

It was a beautiful summer day in Nes Harim, at the outskirts of Jerusalem, overlooking the Judean hills. Our guests included close friends from Israel, Canada, the United States, Finland, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates. My Yeshivah rabbis, classmates and business associates also attended. Rabbi Israel Weisel officiated.

My bride Linda and I came from different sides of the planet, both geographically and culturally. Linda grew up the daughter of a Lutheran priest in Finland, and I a secular Muslim in Kuwait, but after our individual journeys to Judaism, this was more than we could both have dreamed of.

Today, I live in Jerusalem with my wife, where we plan to raise a family and build a Jewish home for generations to come, continuing where my grandmother left off.

being to rise and attach himself to G-dliness.

Of course, this quality can be attained only if the person observes the Torah and mitzvot, not because of the reward that goes with it for the body, or for the soul, or for both, but purely because they are the will and command of the Holy One, blessed be He. It is also for this reason that the text of the brachah [blessing] which a Jew makes before fulfilling a mitzvah does not mention the utility of the mitzvah, but rather the fact that "He has sanctified us with his commandments and commands us."

Finally, I would like to say that the fact that you have had some doubts and uncertainties should not discourage you at all. Indeed, the Torah desires a person to utilize all his capacities, including his mind and intelligence, in the service of G-d, as long as the approach is right, namely, the acceptance of the Torah and mitzvot first. It is quite natural and even desirable that one should understand everything that is within one's mental grasp. In your case this is of additional significance, because you have an opportunity to influence and benefit other young people who have the same bent of mind as you.

Much more can be said in connection with such a profound subject, but I trust that the above lines, though limited in quantity, have sufficient content to illuminate the true aspects of the matter. Besides, should you wish to discuss these matters further, you surely have friends among anash [community members] who will be glad to enlighten you.

With blessing,
[Signature]



The Science of Marriage

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

Marital researchers can predict with an 80-85% accuracy which couples will have serious relationship problems based on self-reporting information about themselves and their partner. These experts identify five personal and relationship dynamics that measure the likelihood of relationship success or failure. They are:

1. Realistic expectations
2. Communication
3. Conflict resolution
4. Personality
5. Religious orientation

Couples that fight or drift apart score low on these scales. Happily married couples score high.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

When “expectations” are unrealistic (either too high or too low)—frustration and disappointment is imminent. When expectations are balanced and realistic, it is relatively easy to feel content.

It is essential to marital contentment that expectations are aligned with one’s partner’s aptitude. “He may never be the best communicator, but it is ok.”

“She may never be well organized and tidy, but I can live with it.”

Adjusting one’s “expectations” to the reality of one’s partner contributes directly to relationship harmony.

As well, all successful couples and families must adapt to changing circumstances. Be they changes that are predictable—like the birth of children or advancing age—or changes that are unanticipated—such as unemployment or serious illness. All these “challenges” require an adjustment of one’s expectations.

COMMUNICATION

Satisfying conversations between a husband and wife builds closeness and trust. Research has shown that there needs to be at least 5 positive interactions to each negative one for there to be feelings of closeness. Even one criticism, or angry outburst, can undo the value of many positive interactions. (The mind remembers negative interactions longer than positive ones!) Understanding this highlights the importance

of continually engaging in positive and pleasant communication, while trying to minimize negative interactions. The challenge is to produce the greatest number of positive verbal interactions with the fewest negative interactions.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The goal in marriage is to live together in peace and harmony. However, for many couples, marriage will at times include occasional disagreements or conflicts. When this happens it is essential to keep the conflict small and contained.

Successful conflict resolution requires three primary criteria. 1) Stay respectful: No name calling, expressions of strong anger, bullying, or attempts to humiliate. 2) Stick to one topic: Stay focused exclusively on the issue at hand. Resist dragging into the conversation other areas of disagreement or disappointment. 3) Keep it small: The disagreement should only last a few minutes and then be quickly set aside and efforts should be made to restore positive feelings and constructive interactions.

PERSONALITY

It is important that you are comfortable with your partner’s personality. He or she doesn’t have to be exactly as you—in fact if this were so, it would probably work against you. Remember, during courtship there was attraction. You chose to marry each other! Even after many years of marriage, that attraction it is still there—at least in potential.

True—years of misunderstanding and conflict can create deep resentment. This accumulated negative emotion can actually change your perception of your partner, leaving you unable to accurately see who he or she really is. For this reason, as much as possible, conflict should be avoided, or at least you should try to look past it when it does occur and seek out the parts of your partner’s personality that you like.

RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

Dissimilar spiritual and cultural differences can stress relationships. Religious orientation includes a set of rules that guides the couple in setting goals, making decisions, and raising children. When religious orientation and culture

are similar, this becomes a set of shared values that contribute to a healthy and cohesive family.

YOUR TAKE-AWAY

Even though formal training in these personal and relationship dynamics are not readily available, you and



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

your partner can work toward achieving a high score. The more you achieve, the closer and more comfortable you will feel with each other and the greater the likelihood your relationship will last the distance.

Take a few moments and review these five scales. Together with your partner, generate a list of suggestions that when implemented will give you the loving relationship you seek. Unlike what many believe, relationship harmony is not “chemistry,”—rather its hard work leading to concrete relationship skills . . . so roll up your sleeves and get started!

In Perke Avos (Jewish ethical classic) the question is asked: “Which is the right path a person should choose?” Answer: “That which is honorable and brings honor from others . . .” Thus, the “honorable path” is a path that is good for both individuals.

A high score in these five scales are all honorable meeting places where partners can create relationship happiness.

Research shows that couples that score high in these five areas, although not necessarily perfect in every way, share happy and meaningful lives.

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Rabbi Avrohom (Abe) 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. Rabbi Kass is the publisher of Wisdom Scientific self-help educational programs. He

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Is Golf the Path to Utopia

Continued from page 2

But if the world is heading toward a purpose for which it was created, if human history is a long journey with a clear and wonderful destination, then my today matters. My efforts today can bring the world a little closer to its purpose. My lifetime builds on the lifetimes that came before me, and gives

a better world to those who will come after me, edging ever closer to the times of Moshiach.

We are not just propelled by our past, we are beckoned by our future. Believing in a messianic future, a world of peace and spiritual clarity, inspires me to make today a step further in the journey. Waiting for Moshiach makes the world better now. It may even improve my score.

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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.

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From Kuwaiti Arab to Israeli Jew

By Mark Halawa

It seems like it was only yesterday that I was a young teenager wearing a dish-dasha (white robe) in Kuwait, and now I wear a kippah and live in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is where my grandparents on my mother's side met. My Jewish grandmother met my Palestinian Muslim grandfather when they were both in their late teens. She later converted to Islam, got married to my grandfather, and lived in Shechem for many years. Following the 1970 Black September uprising, my grandfather—who was a high-ranking officer in Jordan's Arab Legion—was cashiered when King Hussein purged his army of Palestinians. The family relocated to Kuwait, where oil profits were fueling huge business and construction projects. In Kuwait, my mother met my father and got married.

My father was born in Beisan (Beit She'an in Hebrew), Israel, and owned a successful construction company in Kuwait that built some of Kuwait's popular landmarks (which I proudly show off to my friends over Google Earth today). My father attended university in Egypt and was a staunch follower of the Nasser school of thought, Pan Arabism—the unification of the Arab World. I was brought up to believe that Israel was the only obstacle to Arab unity, a satellite presence planted by Western colonial powers to keep the Arab world divided. Therefore, Israel had to be destroyed.

Our family was as secular as a family can be in Arabia. My father was more of a deist than an atheist—he believed in a creator, but strongly rejected all religions, especially Islam. My mother wasn't into religion either at the time, as her priorities were our home and social events. At home we were loosely traditional; we partially observed Ramadan (not the fasting part) and celebrated the two Eid holidays by hosting feasts and visiting friends, family and business partners.

The only religious influence around was my grandfather. Out of love for him, I accompanied him to mosque several times. I never really learned how to pray; I'd stand, kneel and bow in sync with everyone else, then sit on the ground and listen to the sermon. The "sermon" often consisted of the imam's nonstop screaming and shouting about the evils of the Jews. The imam would tell many stories of the horrible things Jews did to Prophet Mohammad, and explain how Allah doomed them to the level of animals, and that fighting the Jews was the duty

of every Muslim who loved his religion.

I'll never forget how the Imam described Joseph's brothers as "evil Jewish brothers of the prophet of Islam, who threw him down the well and then sold him into slavery." The imam then said, "You see how Jews treat their own brothers!" That story angered me. Then, according to custom, the imam finished his sermon with a stream of supplications calling for the destruction of the Jewish people, while the crowd responded to each supplication with a thunderous "Amen!" Even then, as a ten-year-old, this was quite chilling.

After an eventful prayer session, we'd walk back together to my grandparents' home to have lunch with everyone. The smells of my grandmother's delicious food took my mind off of the horrible stories I heard at mosque. But as we ate, I'd think to myself, How could my sweet grandmother have belonged to an evil Jewish cult built on killing of innocent people? Is that why she left? And was she a descendant of pigs and monkeys? Or perhaps the imam was exaggerating? After all, my father told me that religious people were crazy: "Never trust people with beards!"

"When my parents went on vacation, they usually left



us with our grandparents. As kids will do, I snooped around in my grandparents' room, and once found my grandmother's birth certificate, along with old pictures. The last name on the birth certificate was Mizrahi. It struck me as an odd name that I had never heard of. The header on the document was in Arabic, Hebrew and English. I didn't know what Hebrew looked like, but I recognized the letters I had seen in the small book my grandmother would sometimes read from when she sat alone in the guest room, tears trickling down her face. I suspected my grandmother was reciting Jewish

prayers, because on the news, I had seen Jews praying by "Ha'it al Mabka"—the Wailing Wall in Arabic.

Anti-Semitism was commonplace in Kuwait. I remember a show that the Palestinian boy scouts would put on, which ended with the burning of the Israeli flag. One year, I took part in one of the shows. In a twisted way, the organizers wanted to show their success in creating a generation of defenders of the "cause," which helped them raise millions in donations from sympathizers.

My father was a strong supporter of the PLO himself. Since the 1960s, a portion of his monthly salary was deducted and sent to the organization founded by Yasser Arafat (also an engineer working in Kuwait at the time), which promised to finance armed groups to liberate Palestine one day. Arafat raised money from wealthy Palestinians working in Kuwait, as well as from Kuwaitis and the Kuwaiti government. Later, he'd turn against the same government that helped him become a political force, by aligning with Saddam Hussein against Kuwait. My father said that with the hundreds of millions of dollars Arafat raised, he could've created five-star services and infrastructure in the West Bank, but he decided to appropriate the money instead.

In the summer of 1990, when I was 12 years old, our lives changed completely. We were on vacation when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded and annexed Kuwait. My father's business—along with much of the country—was ravaged. Our savings became worthless pieces of paper. We could not return to Kuwait, so we immigrated to Canada. My father managed to sneak back into Kuwait for a few days to retrieve important busi-

ness documents that would later be useful in recovering compensation from a United Nations fund.

But life in the new world didn't suit my family well, and they returned to the Middle East, while I stayed in Canada to attend university.

During my final year at the University of Western Ontario, while I was studying at the Weldon Library, I went down to use the pay phone and found a man sitting at a small table cutting up a green apple. From his dress, he looked Jewish, so I went up to him and asked him straightforwardly, "Hi, are you a Jew?"

He looked up with a smile and answered "No, but I like to dress this way."

I wondered to myself, Are Jewish people supposed to be funny? I introduced myself and told him that I wanted to do something to advance peace in the Middle East. I added that I didn't believe in religion and didn't completely hate Jews because my grandmother was Jewish.

He introduced himself to me as Dr. Yitzchok Block, a professor of philosophy from Harvard who taught at UWO. He was also the Chabad Shaliach at UWO. He invited me to sit down, and cut me a piece of his apple. He asked me, "Which side of the family is that grandmother from?"

I replied, "My mother's side."

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.

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

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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, Rabbinical regulations and laws and also in accordance with the laws of the Province of Ontario and the Confederation of Canada.

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