

# Rabbi Boruch Lesches visits Yeshivah Gedolah

Rabbi Boruch Dov Lesches currently serves as the rabbi of the Chabad community in Monsey (New York). During a recent visit to Melbourne, Rabbi Lesches devoted much of his time inspiring the students through his *Shiurim* and *Farbrengens*.

Rabbi Lesches delivered two *Tanya Shiurim* to all of the students. Additionally, in honour of the hundredth anniversary of the Chassidic work *Hemshech Ayin Beis*, Rabbi Lesches presented two advanced *Shiurim* to the Shluchim, explaining the history and methodology of *Hemshech Ayin Beis*, and the significance of this work to Chabad. Rabbi Lesches also provided an in-depth analysis of the respective viewpoints of the *Ramak* and the *Arizal* regarding the Kabbalistic concept of *Tzimtzum*.

Rabbi Lesches also led a *Farbrengen* for some of the students, emphasizing the importance of using one's gifts to assist and inspire one's fellows, and about properly utilizing one's time at Yeshivah as a foundation for life.



## Tanya Shiur Moment

The seminal philosophical work of *Chabad Chasidus* is commonly referred to by its opening word, *Tanya*, despite its formal titles of *Likkutei Amarim* and *Sefer Shel Beinonim*. One explanation for this is that the word *Tanya* has the same Hebrew letters as the word *Eysan*, an allusion to the essence of the soul. Through learning *Tanya*, one ignites and reveals the very essence of one's soul.

Rabbi Lesches illustrated this point with a story he heard from his own Rosh Yeshivah in Kfar Chabad, Rabbi Eliezer Palczynski. Reb Leizer, as he was affectionately known, was an alumnus of the Slabodka, Mir and Brisk Yeshivos, and a protégé of such giants as the Rogatchover Gaon, the Ohr Sameach and the Brisker Rav. He escaped Europe during the holocaust, and he settled in Israel, eventually marrying the daughter of the legendary Rabbi Aryeh Levin. Although Reb Leizer did not have a Chassidic background, nor did he identify himself as a Chabad Chossid, he nevertheless regarded Chabad Chasidus with the greatest esteem.



Reb Leizer

Reb Leizer recounted an incident which occurred when the Russian government had exiled him to a forced labour camp in remote Siberia.

After spending some time there, he began to take note of one of his fellow inmates, an unassuming and quiet Chabad Chosid, who spent every spare moment occupied with words of Torah and prayer.

One bitterly cold evening, the inmates were warming themselves around the fireplace when a passing Jewish wagoner burst into the room, in order to get some respite from the cold. The wagoner introduced himself as a prisoner who was based in a city several days journey away, and whose primary occupation was transporting goods for the government. In the course of the conversation, the wagoner announced a Mazal Tov; the Russian government had allowed his wife to join him in exile, and he had been blessed with a healthy baby boy.

All of a sudden, the quiet Chabad Chossid became uncharacteristically animated. He jumped up and asked, "What about a Bris?" The wagoner responded, "A Bris? In Siberia? Where would I find a Mohel? Besides, I am on a government job,

and there is no way I can return home in time for the eighth day!" The Chossid responded, "No problem! I am a Mohel, and I have my knife with me! Just give me directions!" With a shining light in his eyes, the Chossid readied himself for the journey.

At that point, Reb Leizer intervened. He approached the Chossid and said, "I don't understand how you could even contemplate taking such a great risk? You are surely aware of the terrible punishment that awaits any prisoner who leaves his camp without permission. You will likely be caught on your way out of the camp, during your journey, or at the very least, on the way back! Besides, you could die from exposure to the cold – especially if you lose your way, or get caught in a snowstorm. Even if you return alive, the commander will no doubt notice your absence and punish you severely. And, all this for the possibility that you *might* be able to perform the Bris on the eighth day – if you are not delayed! It is clear that Torah law does not require you to take so many risks in such a situation." As Reb Leizer wrapped up his *Halachic* and practical arguments, he had the distinct feeling that he was talking to the wall. The Chossid was preparing to go!

Sure enough, the Chossid was nowhere to be seen the next day. Nearly a week passed before he returned, hungry and fatigued, but invigorated with joy. He happily told Reb Leizer that he had managed to arrive on the eighth day, shortly before sunset, and performed the Bris in the nick of time.

Soon enough, the Chossid was summoned before the commander of the camp. The commander demanded to know where he had been, but the Chossid remained silent. The commander knew the Chossid to be a quiet individual, so he assumed that the Chossid was just too meek to explain himself. The commander said, "Alright, I imagine that you probably became ill, and you were too faint to attend roll call. But, next time you are sick, make sure to inform me." With that, he dismissed the Chossid.

Reb Leizer concluded, "I could never figure out from where this Chabad Chossid got the inner strength to literally sacrifice his life – with such joy – for the sake of a Mitzvah, when he was not required to!" The Yeshivah students listening to Reb Leizer's story were not as puzzled. They knew that the very essence of this Chossid's soul had been set alight by the flames of Chasidus, and his one desire was to connect with G-dliness, in any way possible.



# The YG Connection

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## Our Website

The Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ Website is constantly updated, and may be viewed at: [RabbinicalCollege.edu.au](http://RabbinicalCollege.edu.au)

## Lamplighter Weekly

Lamplighter is a popular weekly newsletter published by the Chabad House of Caulfield in conjunction with the Rabbinical College of Australia & New Zealand.

You may view current and past issues at: [RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/Lamplighter](http://RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/Lamplighter)

## STRIVING FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

At the Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ, the study cycle of Gemoro L'Iyun (Talmud in depth) spans eight years, with a different Masechta (tractate) studied each year. The Gemoro curriculum places much emphasis on the thorough analysis of the text, and about 20 Blatt (folios) are learned over the course of the year, with the commentaries of Rashi and Tosfos. The end of 5771 marked the conclusion of Masechta Pesachim, which deals primarily with the laws of Passover.

In addition to the standard curriculum, the Rabbinical College offers an elective "Limud Bal

material without utilizing any study aids, thus honing their academic self-sufficiency. Secondly, the students memorize the material thoroughly, ensuring that they retain their newly-acquired knowledge. The progress of all participants is closely monitored, in order to ensure that all targeted goals are being met, without impairing their performance in other areas of the curriculum.

This past year, three of our students learned large sections of Masechta Pesachim by heart, which they recited in increments of approximately three Blatt: Chaim Pinczower learned 86 Blatt, Menachem Mendel Gutnick (Sydney) learned 63 Blatt, and Zalman

Szmerling learned 63 Blatt. Additionally, Levi Brown distinguished himself by memorizing and reciting over 50 pages of Maamorim (Chassidic discourses) by heart. The Rabbinical College takes great pride in their accomplishments, and presented each student with a non-cash award, to be



Left to right: Levi Brown, Menachem Mendel Gutnick, Chaim Pinczower, Zalman Szmerling.

Peh" (learning by heart) program, aimed at encouraging our advanced students to learn and memorize large sections of the Talmud. The rules of the program are designed to achieve two important goals. Firstly, participants study the

used towards the purchase of Seforim.

The success of last year's program has motivated many more students to participate in the "Limud Bal Peh" program. At present, eight of our advanced students have begun learning and memorizing

Masechta Kiddushin, the tractate which is currently being studied at the Rabbinical College. Masechta Kiddushin deals primarily with the laws of the first stage of a Jewish marriage, and also defines the various modes and aspects of Kinyanim (legal process of acquisition) in general.

We thank our donors for generously contributing towards these awards. Please contact us to obtain further information about this project, or for sponsorship opportunities.

You can view the progress of our Bal Peh participants on our website, at: [RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/BalPeh](http://RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/BalPeh)

## גמרא בעל פה (מסכת קידושין)





## Army Drill



**Rabbi Yitzchak Shlomo is a successful businessman based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During a recent visit in Melbourne, he shared some of his experiences growing up in Israel. These were subsequently recounted at a Farbrengen at the Rabbinical College:**

Shortly after high school, at the young age of eighteen, I was drafted into the IDF. It was quite the transformation; from spoiled and naïve high school kid to highly trained and disciplined soldier – in a matter of months. I was attached to a mortar firing division of the Golani brigade, and we deployed onto the battlefield after six months of training, only a few short weeks before the breakout of the six-day-war. Even before the war, there were constant exchanges of fire between the Syrians bunkered high above in the Golan Heights, and us Israelis exposed in the valleys below.

I didn't come from a religious family, but my father had given me a card containing a "prayer for the soldier". As we were readying to take up our positions that first night on the battlefield, there was an eerie silence. We were all fighting for the first time, and we knew that we were staring into the face of death.

In a moment, my hand instinctively made its way to the card in my pocket. Although I had never really thought about whether I believed in G-d, I found myself fervently asking the Rock of Israel to save and protect me. As I finished the short prayer, I looked up to the questioning glance of my fellow soldiers; they wanted to know what I was doing. I couldn't believe what happened next. My comrades, representing every background, all lined up for a turn to recite the prayer as well. After everyone finished, we deployed.

Our contingent was an integral part of operations. The enemy was strategically in a far better position; they were able to fire directly at us in the valley below, whilst taking cover behind the natural shelter provided by the rocky heights. For the very same reason, we could not fire directly at them; any artillery shells, due to their low angle of flight, would be blocked by the intervening natural rock-face. This is where mortar fire comes in; the cannons propel

the ammunition in a high arc over any obstructions, and come crashing down directly on the enemy positions. Our division travelled directly behind the infantry, in order to soften any upcoming resistance. We would fire our ammunition over the heads of the infantry and into the enemy trenches, shortly before the infantry would storm them.

Our job was arduous and hazardous. We were ready for hand-to-hand combat in case we were ambushed from behind. We were highly trained in operating the mortars, as well as in accurately calculating the exact angle at which to fire them. This was no easy matter, as the mortars are not aimed directly at the target. On top of that, we had to lug around the heavy ammunition and control the track vehicles upon which the canons were mounted.

There was no point in conducting operations during the day, for the enemy would clearly see our positions. So we fought under cover of the night. This did not provide complete obscurity either, as the flares released by the firing canons were noticeable in the dark, and the Syrians would immediately pinpoint our exact location. We therefore had no choice but to fire a quick round of fire, and immediately relocate ourselves and our heavy equipment to a new area in less than half an hour, before the enemy would have a chance to pound the area that we had occupied.

We were lucky to have half an hour. The Syrians were using newly acquired Russian weaponry, and they were not trained to use it. Therefore, every move on the part of the Syrian army required detailed commands from the Russians and an accurate translation into Arabic, before the commands could be executed. We knew this because both armies shared the same radio waves; such was technology back then. All battle commands were delivered over the same wavelength, ours in Hebrew, and theirs in Russian and Arabic.

Bravest of all was our reconnaissance officer. He piloted a small piper plane, and passed back and forth above the Golan Heights. He needed to fly low and slow in order to properly stake out the enemy positions. We could hear the constant pick-pock ricochet of enemy artillery directed against his plane, and we knew all too well that if the engine or fuel tanks were hit, it would spell doom for the plane and its pilot. Yet, the pilot's voice was calm and collected as he radioed our instructions. When we missed our targets, he gently guided us in correcting our strikes. Many a moment, our hearts skipped a beat; we thought that he was going down. I will never forget the feeling of relief when he landed safely. We later saw the plane; bullet holes pierced it like a sieve.

The Syrians were desperate (albeit confused) fighters, and when we eventually conquered the Heights, we found out why.

The Syrian commanders had abandoned the battlefield, but not before chaining their soldiers to their posts. The soldiers were warned that they would be tortured by the Israelis if captured alive, and they fought to the death!

For me, these experiences were a turning point in my life. I confronted age old ideas, such as the value of human life, the sustained existence of the Jewish nation, and their unique relationship with G-d. I also encountered the activities of Chabad, whose people had the tremendous self-sacrifice to visit and inspire us in such dangerous conditions. These experiences ultimately led me on my quest to discover Yiddishkeit.

Fast-forward several years. It was the early seventies, and I was studying at Berkeley, California. I would frequent the Chabad House, and one Shabbos, we were privileged to host the famous Reb Mendel Futerfas. Reb Mendel was not expecting to meet an Israeli at Berkeley, and during the Shabbos afternoon Farbrengen, he wanted to hear about me.

When I told him about my army experiences, Reb Mendel had a question: "That first night on the battlefield, you and your comrades were seized with fear! How were you able to function? How were you able to execute your commands with the requisite precision?"

I explained to Reb Mendel that this was the point of our training exercises; to drill battle technique so deeply into the fiber of our natures that we would be able to fight even in our sleep. Only due to our training were we able to function in the confusing atmosphere of the battlefield, even when we were deprived of food and sleep, fearful, disoriented, emotionally confused, or grieving the fallen. Our bodies were trained to fight, even when we were not there mentally and emotionally.

Reb Mendel responded, "You just taught me a valuable lesson. Much of Yiddishkeit seems to be all about going through the motions. We daven three times a day, and recite exactly the same words in the Shmone Esrei. We celebrate Shabbos each week, in exactly the same way. Every Yom Tov is celebrated exactly as it was the year prior, and exactly as it will be in the year following. Why?"

"You have just answered that for me! We go through the motions, again and again, in order to prepare us for those turbulent times when we are not "there"; when we are torn emotionally, going through difficult patches, or having our doubts. Without these drills, we might fizzle during these crucial moments of spiritual battle, maybe never to return. But our constant training and drilling protects us. It allows us to remain loyal to practice even when we doubt its purpose. Through it, we survive to see better times spiritually."

## Regards from Ungvar, Ukraine. A letter from an alumnus.

Dear Rabbis,

This is Aron Levitz emailing all the way from Ungvar, Ukraine. As you know, I am spending the next several months spreading *Yiddishkeit* in Ukraine. I have been busy teaching *Alef-Beis* to one of my new Russian buddies. I have also been visiting a local place that offers English-Language courses to Ukrainians, in search for fellow Jews. This way, they can maybe help me with my Russian language skills, whilst at the same time I can teach them a little English, along with a lot of Torah.

I also started learning with the rabbi's son, (the future of Ukrainian Jewry...), imparting all those learning skills that I picked up at YG. One of the things I remember from my Yeshivah days is that learning *Gemoro* is like travelling through a city. Imagine a city without street signs! How do you get from place to place? Similarly, the *Gemoro* is not punctuated, and it seems so difficult to navigate! However, in truth, there are certain words and phrases that convey certain connotations and serve as the "street signs". When we see words like *Heichi Dami* or *Bo'ee* or *Tanya*, we can immediately determine whether the *Gemoro* is asking a question, making a statement, giving an answer, and so on. This *Geshmakeh Vort* (delightful thought) really puts learning *Gemoro* in a different light.

I commenced my own daily study schedule. I have started the first page of *Kiddushin*, and I am learning *Makos* in the afternoon. I am also going to devote some of my day to learning *Mishnayos*, *Tanach* and *Chassidus*.

I miss the days in YG when I could daven at length... I am often needed to serve as the *Chazzan* in the Shule, (as there are not too many qualified *Chazzanim* here,) and I must keep up with the pace of the *Minyan*.

Last week, I spent Shabbos in Munkatch with the Munkatcher Rebbe and two-hundred of his Chassidim from all over the world who came to celebrate his grandson's Bar-Mitzvah. It was great to spend a Ukrainian Shabbos with so many *Yidden* who have *Chassidische Hergeishim* and *Hashkofos* (Chassidic feelings and outlook).

Lots of *Hatzlocho*.



Your Talmid,  
Aron Levitz  
(Left)

## New Shluchim Arrive

Melbourne recently welcomed its newest group of student Shluchim to the Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ. Shortly before the arrival of the new Shluchim, all students boarded a bus for the forty-five minute drive to Melbourne's Tullamarine International Airport, in order to personally greet the Shluchim. When the Shluchim appeared, the airport arrivals hall filled with song as the Shluchim and Bochorim broke out into a dance. One of the Shluchim then delivered a short speech to the hundreds of people at the airport, explaining their significance as emissaries of the Rebbe.



Notwithstanding the long flight from New York to Melbourne, the new Shluchim showed no sign of fatigue, but immediately joined the Yeshivah schedule. At the conclusion of the evening Seder Chassidus, the Shluchim still did not rest, but instead began planning some of their community activities.

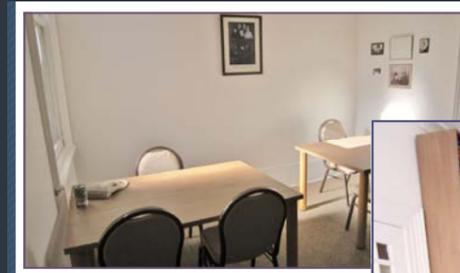


The names of the new Shluchim are: Moshe Aharon Backman, Avrohom Engel, Menachem Mendel Lieberman, Israel Ohana, Shneur Zalman Ossowiecki and Shmuel Slonim. They join the second-year Shluchim: Menachem Mendel Begun, Shimon Dubinsky, Hirschel Gourarie, Levi Liberow, Shmuel Lipskier and Menachem Mendel Polter.



The Shluchim play a pivotal role in Yeshivah Gedolah, and in the community at large. We wish them much success in their Shlichus.

## Upgrade to Building Facilities



The Hanholo office was recently renovated in order to accommodate the increasing number of academic staff.



The office interior was expanded, and the office furniture and facilities were upgraded. Construction was carried out during the month of Tishrei, in order to minimize any disruptions to the academic schedule. We thank the generous sponsors of this important project.