Miracle Candles

With Menachem Mendel Gourarie

The seventh night of Chanukah had us knocking on the door of one of the houses along our "Mivtzoim route". We were greeted by a middle-aged Jewish man, and we asked him whether he had a Menorah. The man responded that he did have a Menorah, but he had run out of candles. We happily gave him some candles, and offered to help him lay Tefillin, to which he agreed.

He initially wanted to know whether we would prefer a donation to his laying Tefillin, but we assured him that we preferred the Mitzvah. He was surprised – and impressed. We explained the meaning of Tefillin, and also discussed some other topics that he was interested in.

As we were about to leave, he told us that right before we arrived, he had been wondering how he could possibly light the Menorah that night, since he had run out of candles. Nevertheless, he assured his family that there would be some sort of Chanukah miracle – and just at that moment, our knocks were heard at his front door.

The Chanukah miracle lives on.

Attention Alumni

Do you have a YG experience or photos that you would like to share with our readers? Please contact us!

Mivtzoim Report 1

With Akiva Vallins

We would pass the tall building on Queens Street every week on the way to our destination. Until Chanukah, it never crossed our minds to go inside and seek out fellow Jews. If only we had known how many Jews worked there, we would have paid a visit ages ago.

Chanukah is one of the best times for seeking out and establishing new contacts. Each night as we light the Menorah, we add one candle more than the previous night. This symbolizes that we must always grow, adding to our Yiddishkeit bit by bit. One can and should always seize the present moment and put on Tefillin – even if he hasn't so much as seen a pair of Tefillin in ages. The same applies to lighting Shabbos candles, saying goodbye to the week that was, and indulging in the peaceful atmosphere that is Shabbos.

With seven Menorahs in our bag, we entered the building on Queens Street. Looking at the directory of businesses situated at each level, I truly doubted we would find any fellow Jews here. There were no obvious candidates with give-away names such as Goldstein's Jewellery or Freedman's Accounting.

As it turned out, we met five Jews in the building. We started on the fourteenth floor, and gradually made our way down. We didn't meet much success at the top five floors. On one of these floors, we entered a large office with about thirty workers sitting at computers. We really didn't want to disturb, so we quietly asked the lady closest to us if anyone in the office was Jewish. We explained that it was a Jewish holiday and we had packages for any Jews we would meet. She immediately stood up and shouted at the top of her lungs, "HEY! IS ANYONE HERE JEWISH?" Not exactly the reaction we were expecting. No one identified themselves as Jewish.

We eventually arrived at the sixth floor, and we went to every door, only to receive the same response, "sorry – no one here is Jewish." We entered the very last door of the sixth floor, and asked the sole occupant if he was Jewish. He looked at us curiously and asked us why. We informed him that it was the Jewish Holiday of Chanukah, whereupon he told us that he wasn't Jewish, but his mother was.

Immediately, we told him excitedly that this meant he was Jewish as well. He invited us to take a seat and tell him more. As it turned out, he had quite a few Jewish friends, and he was going that very night to a Chanukah party. He had never had a Bar Mitzvah, so we showed him a pair of Tefillin and told him that we could have a Bar Mitzvah right there and then. Enthusiastically, he put the Tefillin on, and we read the Shema together out loud. We also gave him a Menorah and Chanukah guide, explaining to him how it was all done. He was so happy that he started calling his Jewish friends to inform them of the great news that, for the first time in his life, he had put on Tefillin.

Mivtzoim Report 2

With Menachem Mendel Gourarie

We were about to finish our "Mivtzoim route", when we knocked on the door of a well-kept house with an old Mezuzah on it. A woman came to the door and inquired what we wanted. We wished her happy Chanukah and asked if she had lit the Menorah. She thought for a moment and responded, "Is it the second night or the third?"

After telling her that it was already the eighth night, she invited us into her house. We noticed many boxes scattered throughout the house; she explained that she had recently moved from Sydney, and had not yet located her Menorah. We kindled the Menorah together and recounted the story of Chanukah. We also encouraged her to accept upon herself an additional Mitzvah in honour of Chanukah. After giving it some thought, she replied that she would start lighting Shabbos candles each Friday afternoon. She asked us to remind her on Friday to ensure that she doesn't forget.

בס"ד

The YG Connection

The Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ Newsletter

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In this Issue:

Special thanks to Menachem Aron for preparing this issue.

Our Website

The Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ Website is constantly updated, and may be viewed at:
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

Heoros

"Heoros Hatmimim" is a periodical published by the Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ, containing Torah thoughts and insights. The most recent edition was published in honour of 19 Kislev, and may be viewed at:
RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/Heoros

Contributions for the next edition may be submitted by email to:
heoros@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

Chanukah Outreach Campaign

Over the past two weeks, students of the Rabbinical College have been spreading the message and joy of the Chanukah Festival across Melbourne.

A few days before Chanukah, the students packed hundreds of Chanukah Menorah kits. These included extra-long candles, to satisfy the Halachic requirement that Chanukah lights burn for at least half-hour after nightfall – a challenge in Melbourne, where nightfall can be as late as 9:17pm.

On the days prior to Chanukah, as well as throughout all the days of Chanukah, students visited tens of locations around Melbourne to distribute Menorah Kits and enable Jewish people to fulfil the Mitzvah of Chanukah. Doughnuts, dreidels and Chanukah Guides were also distributed at many locations.

On the day before Chanukah, students made their way through the streets of the CBD, visiting various office buildings and businesses, helping those who had not arranged their own Menorah in time for Chanukah. Other locations visited throughout Chanukah ranged from Bentleigh to Bayside, Caulfield to Carnegie, and Moorabbin to McKinnon – to name just a few.

Apart from spreading the spirit of Chanukah, the students also enabled many men to lay Tefillin, adorned houses with Mezuzahs, and distributed Shabbos Candle kits.

At Chabad House of Caulfield's annual "Chanukah in the Park", the students of Rabbinical College distributed Menorah kits to the thousands of people who came to Caulfield Park to celebrate. The students also helped many men lay Tefillin, several of whom were doing so for their first time and effectively celebrating their "Bar Mitzvah".

The students also staged a play at the park, depicting the story of Chanukah and the victory of the Maccabees. Countless hours and much effort were invested into the half-hour play, and it was thoroughly enjoyed by the very large audience it attracted.

A Car Menorah Parade was organized during Chanukah by the students. More than forty Menorah-adorned cars drove through several major shopping strips and densely populated areas in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The parade generated much publicity about Chanukah, achieving one of the main aspects of Chanukah; Pirsumei Nissa – publicizing the miracle (of Chanukah).

The Chanukah festivities were wrapped up with a *Latke Ovent* – "Latke Evening", where the students relaxed, spun dreidels and shared their Chanukah Mivtzoim experiences.

We look forward to spending Chanukah next year in Jerusalem, and once again witnessing the kindling of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash, with the coming of our righteous Moshiach speedily in our days.

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Location: Bentleigh

With Motty Rubin

While it seemed like a regular evening in the residential area of Bentleigh, a series of mini "Chanukah miracles" were about to take place. First, we chanced upon a Jew who asked us to bring the celebration to his home after his mother returned from work and would be able to join.

We then tried our luck with some of the other homes. We met an individual who asked if we were lost. After clarifying that he was not Jewish, he pointed out a Jewish home at the corner. Since we had not known that the inhabitants were Jewish, we hadn't originally planned to visit that particular home. It wasn't long before we were bringing the warmth of the holiday to the Israeli family who lived there, celebrating with doughnuts and a grand dreidel game. At the end of our visit, they directed us to their Jewish neighbours, an elderly Russian couple.

We were in for a surprise when Moshe, a young man, answered the door. He was clearly not the elderly Russian couple we had anticipated. We greeted him "Happy Chanukah!" Before we could continue, Moshe responded: "Not really interested, try your luck with others – don't waste your time here." However, after engaging Moshe by exchanging our Jewish names and courageously pulling off a dreidel game at the front door, the ice was broken. Soon enough, he was eating fresh doughnuts and reciting their blessings. As it was still before sunset, we offered to help Moshe lay Tefillin. Hearing this, Moshe's wife brought out the Tallis that he had worn at their recent wedding. It was apparent that Moshe's Neshama (soul) was coming out of hiding as well. The couple then explained how divine it was that we managed to meet them, as they had just returned that very day from house-watching for a friend. They had stopped by at their parents' home, who it turns out were not there and were coming later. After they thanked us, we gave them a Menorah to light, and another one for their parents'. Later, Moshe emailed us a photo of them lighting the Menorah.

Rushing back to our schedule, we ran over to the home of the first Jew we had met, getting there as sundown was nearing. We had just enough time to help him put Tefilin on. After kindling the seven Menorah lights and schmoozing with him and his mother, they mentioned a relative in the area who was in a difficult situation and living by himself, and who would really appreciate a visit.

The mother also mentioned another friend who had been staying with them while her new home was being built. She commented that due to the recent move into the new home, her friend didn't have access to her Menorah. We immediately asked her, "Can you drive us over there now?" Surprised at our reaction, she sped off with us to her friend's home. As it was already getting late, her friend was quite surprised to see her, especially with two young Chabad rabbis in tow. We immediately searched for a proper setting for the Menorah. Scanning the doorposts of the new home, we noted that none had a Mezuzah. "Perfect! We will first install a Mezuzah (which we had with us for just this purpose) on the right side of the door, and then kindle the Menorah on the left side!" After we lit the Menorah and were getting ready to leave the house, the new resident pointed out another Jewish house on the block. We left an additional "Chanukah Package" for her new neighbours.

Driving back, we asked if we could be dropped off at our new Russian friends, hoping to meet Moshe's parents and light the Menorah with them. When we arrived, we saw that they had already lit the Menorah. We were excited after a day full of Hashgacha Protis and seeing Hashem's hand throughout the day, so we asked Moshe if he would drive us to bring the holiday spirit to another dear Jew who was lonely. He agreed, and we sped off to the address we had been given earlier. After a bit of a search, we found the humble abode of this lonely Jew – who was not lonely for much longer! We joined with him in song and joy, and helped him light the Menorah, as well as his own soul, both spiritually and physically.

Stats

1800 Doughnuts

1200 Menorah Kits

875 Jewish Homes Visited

1150 Hours Volunteered

40 Car Menorahs

We thank our sponsors for all their assistance making this year's Chanukah Mivtzoim a reality!

Chanukah in the Park

Car Menorah Parade

Location: CBD

With Yisroel Leib Lester

On the day before Chanukah, Levi Gross and I headed to the city, for Mivtzoim. We were just arriving at the street corner closest to our final destination, and we immediately encountered a young Jewish man! He was on his way to meet another Jewish friend of his, so we gave him a Menorah for his friend as well. After talking a little about Chanukah and the miracles of old, we went on to explain that Hashem cares about the Torah and Mitzvos that we currently do. We asked him if he would like to put on Tefillin. He was happy to oblige, especially as it had been a while since he had last put on Tefillin. He was so excited that he snapped a picture of himself wearing Tefillin.

After wishing him happy Chanukah and parting ways, we continued down the street, telling passers-by about the holiday of Chanukah and asking if they might be Jewish. After several hours, we had still not met another Jew, so we headed back to Federation Square with the rest of our Menorahs. We were glad that we had the opportunity to help at least one Jew with Chanukah and Tefillin.

Arriving at the Square, we observed some of the other Bochurim trickling in from their respective Mivtzoim adventures. "Let's dance," someone suggested. An enthusiastic rendition of "Lehodos Ulehalel" ensued, and we began dancing in a circle. As the song came to an end, one of the Shluchim presented a short Chanukah message to all of the people seated on the wide stairs at the Square, and he invited all Jews to come and get their own Menorah. One person had been videoing us throughout our dance, and he was eagerly taking in the sight.

As we neared the top of the stairs, a woman came over to us and asked, "Can I speak to you for a moment?" She told us that she was Jewish and had come to Australia just three months ago from Israel, and had been looking for a synagogue to attend. She had heard that there was a Chabad House in Melbourne, but she couldn't locate it. We provided her with the rabbi's number and asked her if she had a Menorah. Since she did not, we gave her a Menorah and wished her a happy Chanukah. The hand of divine providence was clearly evident – imagine had we not danced and sung?

Next, we noticed that the person who had been videoing us was still intently looking at us. We walked over to him and asked if he was Jewish. He didn't seem to understand, and mumbled a few words in Russian. So we switched over to Russian: "Ti Ivrei (are you Jewish)?" He responded with a rush of Russian words which I did not understand – "Ti Ivrei" is just about the only Russian phrase that I know! He realized that we didn't understand what he was saying, so he proceeded to tell us in broken English that he is Jewish, and that he had eaten Matzah before. He added that he was nevertheless having trouble with accepting the idea of Hashem, due to the atheist education he received in communist Russia.

After speaking with him for several more minutes, we concluded by singing "Nyet Nyet Nikavoh" – a song with Russian lyrics proclaiming that there is nothing aside Hashem. Based on our discussions, we felt this song was most appropriate. He laughed with pleasure as we sang it, and asked us if he could video us singing it to show his mother upon his return back to Russia.

On Chanukah, our job is to light the Menorah. We hope that our efforts, with Hashem's help and the Rebbe's inspiration, will fan the flame of the souls of the Jews that we had the privilege of meeting this Chanukah.