



ISSUE

02

16 Iyar 5771
20 May 2011

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Our Website

The Rabbinical College of Australia & NZ Website is being constantly updated.

Recently added features include an "In the Press" section, which contains news articles about the College over the last forty years.

Another recently added feature is the "Archives" section, which contains pictures of Yeshiva Gedolah's early years. Readers are invited to view these pictures online, and to suggest suitable captions and/or provide further background information.

Lag B'Omer Message

Letter from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, dated 14 Iyar 5740 (April 30, 1980).



As is well known, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai hid in a cave for twelve years, then for another year, because of his uncompromising stand in preserving Yiddishkeit under Roman rule and persecution. When he finally regained freedom, one of the first things he set out

to do was to inquire, "Is there anything that needs to be rectified?" Upon learning of such a situation, he immediately set out to rectify it, though it only meant sparing Jews the bother of taking a roundabout route. Yet, since it was a matter of concern to Jews, it deeply touched him, and he spared neither effort nor time until he actually remedied the situation.

Consider: After spending thirteen years in a cave, with only sand to cover his body, and finally emerging painfully scarred by his ordeal — how did he begin his free life? He immediately inquired what there was to rectify, and — true to the principle that "action is the essential thing" — he threw himself into the task and did not rest until it was accomplished ...

A further point connected with Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai comes to light at the beginning of the preface to his work, the Zohar: "In the Beginning: Rabbi Shimon opened his remarks, '...What sustains the world ... the voice of young children learning Torah, and because of them the world is saved...'"

In Torah-true education of Jewish children, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's two teachings converge and come to fruition. It calls for the utmost effort, until every Jewish child, boy and girl, is provided with the kind of education that will ensure they keep the way of G-d in the fullest measure, and pass it on to their children and children's children.

Siyum HaRambam

In 5744 (1984), the Lubavitcher Rebbe initiated the daily study of the Rambam's Mishneh Torah (Maimonides' compendium of Jewish law). In honour of the completion of the 29th cycle of Rambam, the Yeshiva Gedolah recently hosted a Siyum HaRambam celebration, which was attended by students of the Yeshiva Gedolah, Mesivtah, Heichal Menachem — Machon Chaim and members of the community.



The evening was chaired by Moshe Wolvovsky (Shliach at the Yeshiva Gedolah), and the event opened with a video presentation regarding the importance of learning Rambam. Yossi Bassman (Heichal Menachem — Machon Chaim) discussed why the Rambam did not include any explanations in his compendium of Jewish Law, and the significance in studying his works.

Moshe Winner (Yeshiva Gedolah) performed the Siyum of the 29th cycle of the Rambam. This was followed by spontaneous song and dance, in celebration of the Siyum.

Osher Kluwgant (Mesivtah) began the 30th cycle of the Rambam and explained the significance of the Posuk (verse) which the Rambam bases his work on. The keynote speaker, Rabbi Shimon Cowen, explained the opinions of the Rambam and the Ramban concerning the Messianic age. The event concluded with Bench-ing, led by the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Binyomin Cohen.





Surmounting the Insurmountable



Rabbi Aaron Eliezer Ceitlin was a member of the fourth Kevutzah (group) of Shluchim to spend two years as the Lubavitcher Rebbe's emissaries to the Yeshivah Gedolah in

Melbourne. Today, he serves as a Shliach in Tzfat (Safed - Israel), and is the director of several Chabad-Lubavitch institutions. At a recent Farbrengen at the Rabbinical College, Rabbi Ceitlin related the following:

Rabbi Yitzchok Meir Hertz is the current Rosh Yeshivah (dean of studies) at the Chabad Yeshivah in London, England. Rabbi Hertz hails from a family of Gerer Chassidim, but as a young Yeshivah student, he became attracted to Chabad and enrolled in the central Chabad-Lubavitch Yeshivah, in Brooklyn.

After some time, he entered his first Yechidus (private audience) with the Rebbe. During the Yechidus, the Rebbe suggested two undertakings for him to finish within a year; to study the entire Talmud Bavli, and to collaborate with several others in indexing the prolific writings of the Tzemach Tzedek, the third Lubavitcher Rebbe.

For several days after the Yechidus, Rabbi Hertz was in a state of confusion. The Rebbe had just given him two formidable and daunting assignments, and he could not fathom how he could possibly complete them in the course of only one year. Finally, he went to seek counsel with the elderly and wise Rabbi Shmuel Levitin, who was the students' Mashpia (spiritual advisor).

Rabbi Levitin listened attentively to Rabbi Hertz, and after hearing what the problem was, he chuckled. He then responded with the following anecdote: "There was once a man who purchased a fancy hat. He excitedly put it on in the morning, and on his way out the door took one last admiring look in the mirror. Upon gazing at his reflection, the thought crossed his mind that he would look even more flat-

tering if he tipped his hat at a different angle. But the man was still unsatisfied; he was a bit apprehensive of the slightly different look. So he adjusted the hat a little this way, and then the other way. And so it went, until the man realized that he wasted the entire morning in front of the mirror, accomplishing nothing. The world did not see him, nor his hat, because he was so worried about the way the world would view him and his hat!"

Rabbi Levitin concluded with a smile, "You need to finish the Talmud and the Tzemach Tzedek's index within a year? Well, then just do it! Don't waste your time thinking about how it could possibly be done, because then it won't get done! Just begin, forge ahead little by little, and then it will get done!"

And indeed, it was done.

The lesson: *At times, we find ourselves face to face with a task that appears daunting. The correct approach is not to confront the entire task at once, but rather, to tackle it bit by bit, without despairing. Just do it! This is what L'Chatchiler Ariber is all about!*

Davening Like the Bears



Rabbi Adin (Steinsaltz) Even-Yisrael is a well-known teacher and author, most famous for his monumental Hebrew translation and commentary on the Talmud. At a recent Farbrengen in Mel-

bourne, attended by many Yeshivah Gedolah students, Rabbi Steinsaltz shared the following:

Serfdom was very much the lot of the European Jew during the late middle ages and the early modern era. Many a Jew found himself at the mercies of his local Poretz (lord of the manor), and in turn, many a Poretz took pride in the resourcefulness of his local Jew, whom he tended to call Mosh'ke.

A certain Poretz once demanded that "his" Mosh'ke appear before him. Mosh'ke duly arrived, and the local Poretz related that he had gotten into a dispute with the neighbouring Poretz regarding whose Mosh'ke was more talented. In the heat of the moment, the local Poretz bet that his Mosh'ke was capable

of teaching a bear how to daven (pray). The local Poretz informed Mosh'ke that he therefore had only four months to obtain a bear and teach it to daven, and if not, he would pay the price for causing the local Poretz to lose his bet.

Poor Mosh'ke knew better than to argue. He valued his life too much. So he set out for the forest, in order to find a "suitable candidate". After several days, Mosh'ke came across a bear cub, hungry as can be, with no mother in sight. Mosh'ke immediately put out some honey, and watched from the side as the young bear cub lapped it up. He repeated the process for several days, until the bear was tame enough to allow Mosh'ke to handle it. Before long, Mosh'ke brought the cub home, and locked it in a cage. He gradually coached the bear to stand on its hind legs and shockel (sway in a prayerful way). He then trained it to hold a Siddur (prayer book) and turn the pages from right to left, whilst shockeling. To complete the look, he taught the bear to grunt and growl rhythmically, in sync with the shockeling and page turning.

Soon enough, the four months was over. Mosh'ke appeared before the local Poretz and proudly announced that he had completed his mission successfully. The local Poretz immediately sent word, but the neighbouring Poretz did not want to believe that the bear had actually been taught to daven. Mosh'ke was instructed to bring the bear to the neighbouring Poretz, in order to show him firsthand.

Mosh'ke dutifully arrived with the bear, and when he gave the sign, the bear began to shockel and growl, whilst looking at the pages and turning them. The neighbouring Poretz scoffed at the spectacle and protested, "You haven't taught him to pray like you do in your synagogue! You have merely taught him to sway and growl and to turn some pages! Does the bear really know and care about what it is saying?"

By now, Mosh'ke was more than exasperated. He turned to the Poretz and exclaimed, "Your Excellency, with all due respect, but what do you actually think WE do when we go to the synagogue to pray?"

The lesson: *Jewish observance requires a lot of action and deeds. But we must ask ourselves whether we are just going through the motions, or we actually mean what we do. Are we really praying, or are we just swaying and growling and turning some pages?*

Purim 5771



Yisroel Halon recounts his experience reading the Megillah at the Purim Party of Young-UJA, at the MCG:

It was Shabbos, the day before Purim. I was at the Yeshivah Centre, when someone came over to me and asked for help. He told me that a Purim party had been arranged at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, but he had missed out a "small" detail – arranging for someone to read the Megillah. Of course, I was more than glad to assist. A time was arranged for someone to come and pick me up that night at Yeshivah Gedolah.

Sure enough, at the appointed hour, two young men arrived at Yeshivah Gedolah. I asked them to make a detour along the way, so that I could borrow a Megillah – just in case there wouldn't be one available at the Purim Party!

For the duration of the ride, I spoke to these two young men about Judaism. They were not very familiar with the significance of the festival of Purim! At that point, I realized that I needed to deliver a brief and basic rundown of Purim at this party. For the rest of the ride, I explained the story of Purim to these two young men, and its significance in our daily lives.

When we arrived at our destination, the organizers were happy to see us. I asked them whether a Megillah had been prepared. One of the organizers proudly

showed me the copies that he had downloaded from chabad.org. I smiled and explained that although those copies were perfectly suitable for the listeners to follow along, nevertheless, the actual Megillah reader needed to read it from a scroll. Luckily, I had brought along a Megillah, which I showed the organisers.

We waited until about thirty people had gathered, and the Megillah reading was shortly underway. Afterwards, many of the participants came over to thank me for attending, as they otherwise would not have heard the Megillah. Some told me that it was the first time in their life that they heard the Megillah.

Shortly after the conclusion of the first Megillah reading, we began a second round, for the sake of those who did not make it on time for the first reading.

On the way back to Yeshivah Gedolah, my driver mentioned that he would be making a Purim party at his house the next day, but he did not have any Torah thoughts to relay. I shared with him a beautiful Sichah (talk of the Rebbe). He really enjoyed it, and looked forward to repeating it at his party.

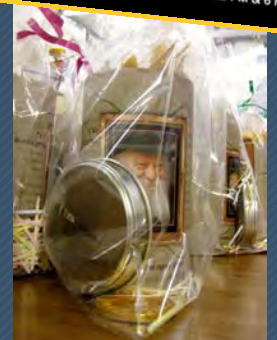
A few days later, one of the event organizers paid a visit to Yeshivah Gedolah, in order to thank me for my assistance, and to present me with a certificate as a token of their appreciation.



Purim Mitzvot Totals

This year, Purim was celebrated on Sunday, March 20. The students of the Rabbinical College of Australia & New Zealand conducted Megillah readings and brought the joy of Purim to a wide variety of businesses, eateries, residencies, hospitals, old age homes, markets, schools, childcare centres and prisons. They also assisted and participated in various events conducted by local synagogues, Chabad Houses and community organizations. In addition, several students travelled to Brisbane and Coffs Harbour, and conducted Purim celebrations in those communities.

- Number of Mishloach Manos packages delivered on Purim: 363
- Number of Mishloach Manos packages delivered before Purim: 500
- Number of Megillah readings: 76
- Number of Attendees at these Megillah readings: 367
- Number of people who fulfilled Matanos L'evyonim: 260
- Number of people who donned Tefillin: 136
- Number of people who were informed of the Sheva Mitzvos (7 Noachide Laws): 12



The Rebbe, the President, the Yeshivah Gedolah Shluchim, and the Moon

Rabbi Aaron Eliezer Ceitlin was a member of the fourth Kevutzah (group) of Shluchim. He recently recounted an event which began unfolding when he embarked on his Shlichus to Melbourne:

It was just after Pesach of 5733 (1973), and our Kevutzah of six was finalizing our preparations in anticipation of our imminent departure to Melbourne. We were advised that we would merit to attend a Yechidus (audience) with the Rebbe on the 28th of Nissan (April 30). We were to attend together with the third Kevutzah who had just returned from their two year stint at the Yeshivah Gedolah of Melbourne.

When we entered Yechidus, Rabbi Hodakov (the Rebbe's personal secretary) arranged us so that the new Shluchim stood at the right, and the previous Shluchim at the left. The Rebbe turned to Rabbi Hodakov and asked, "Where are the previous Shluchim?" Rabbi Hodakov pointed to the Shluchim standing at the left. The Rebbe repeated his question in a tone of astonishment. Rabbi Hodakov, not understanding the Rebbe's intention, pointed to each group of Shluchim, saying, "these are the new Shluchim and these are the previous Shluchim." The Rebbe asked, "Where are the **even earlier** Shluchim? Why was it not arranged that they enter as well." Rabbi Hodakov asked whether he should call them in, and the Rebbe said that it should be done if it would not take too long. Rabbi Hodakov left the Rebbe's room; the Rebbe sat quietly, and we waited with bated breath. Soon enough, the previous Shluchim started to arrive bit by bit, and presently, the Rebbe began the recitation of the Ma'amar (Chassidic discourse) on the topic "One should not part from his friend but from within a matter of Halacha" (Brochos 31a).

After the conclusion of the Ma'amar, the Rebbe noted that our itineraries would be taking us through England, as well as through Israel, where our main tasks would be Tefillah (prayer) and Tzedakah (charity). The Rebbe handed each of us ten British Pounds for the (Chabad) institutions in England, ten dollars for the (Chabad) institutions in Israel and another ten dollars for charity, and finally, ten Australian dollars for the (Chabad) institutions in Australia and another one Australian dollar for charity. The Rebbe also gave each of us a copy of the Sicha (talk) that he had delivered to the previous group of Shluchim two years prior, a copy of two general letters addressed to the worldwide Jewish community, and a Tanya.

The Rebbe instructed us to visit the Rabbonim at each of our stopovers, and to pass on his personal regards to "all good friends" in the places that we would visit, and especially to those in Australia. The Rebbe added that we should convey his special regards to "our friend Shneur Zalman the son of Sarah".

When we exited the Yechidus, we wondered who the Rebbe meant when he referred to "our friend Shneur Zalman the son of Sarah". After some inquiries, we realized that the Rebbe was referring to Mr Shazar, who served as the third President of Israel, from 21 May 1963 until 24 May 1973. Mr Shazar shared an extremely warm relationship with the Rebbe, and had visited 770 on two occasions in his capacity as president.

During our stay in Israel, several Chabad activists in Israel accompanied us on our audience with President Shazar. Towards the end of our meeting, we broke out into a Chassidic dance. We explained to President Shazar that we were singing the new song which had been composed several weeks earlier, in honour of the Rebbe's birthday. The words of the song were drawn from the chapter of Tehillim (Psalms Chapter 72) which corresponded to the Rebbe's age: "In his



days may the righteous flourish, with much peace so long as the Moon endures; may he rule from sea to sea, and from the river until the ends of the earth".

President Shazar became visibly excited at hearing the Hebrew words "Ad Bli Yare'ach" ("so long as the Moon endures", or literally, "until the Moon is no more"). He told us that several years earlier, the President of the United States solicited statements from the leaders of 73 countries around the world, in honour of the historic Apollo 11 space mission to the moon. These statements were etched onto a silicon disc about the size of a 50-cent piece, with the words "From Planet Earth -- July 1969" wrapped around its rim. The Apollo 11 astronauts deposited the disc at the moon's Sea of Tranquility.

President Shazar shared with us his initial uncertainty regarding what to write, and that he finally settled on the following: "From the President of Israel in Jerusalem with hope for 'abundance of peace so long as the Moon endureth'." President Shazar concluded with great excitement, "And these very words are now the Rebbe's song!"

The meeting ended with photographs together with the President. Just as we thought that we were done, President Shazar told us that he wanted to take another picture with us, together with the Megillah that the Rebbe had presented him on a previous visit to 770, on Purim 5731 (1971).

Our meeting ended on a high note. We continued on our journey to Australia, and President Shazar concluded his second term as president on 24 May – less than one month after our visit.

At the beginning of July 1973, Rabbi Shimon Lazaroff, the Rebbe's emissary in Texas, received a telephone call from one of the local community leaders. He explained that Mr Shazar was visiting the USA, and that he had a short stopover in Texas on Gimmel Tammuz (July 3) enroute to Mexico. A reception for Mr Shazar had been arranged to take place at the airport, and Rabbi Lazaroff was invited to attend. Rabbi Lazaroff immediately contacted Rabbi Hodakov to ask whether he should attend this reception. As he spoke to Rabbi Hodakov, he could hear the Rebbe in the background, quietly telling Rabbi Hodakov what to answer. The Rebbe asked whether Rabbi Lazaroff knew the significance of Gimmel Tammuz.

Rabbi Lazaroff replied that he remembered a Sicha (talk) in which the Rebbe explained the difference between Gimmel-Tammuz, and Yud-Beis-Tammuz. The Rebbe had explained that Gimmel-Tammuz represents the love of a Chossid to his Rebbe, and that Yud-Beis Tammuz represents the love of a Rebbe to his Chossid.

A bit of historical background is in order: In 1927, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn; 1880-1950) was arrested by agents of the Soviet secret police for his work in encouraging Torah observance throughout the Soviet Union. He was held in the notorious Spalerno prison in Leningrad, and was repeatedly interrogated and beaten. After an initial death sentence, international pressure compelled the Soviet regime to first commute the sentence to ten years of hard labour in Siberia, and then to a three-year term of exile in Kostrama. On Gimmel-Tammuz, 18 days after his arrest, he was released from prison and sent into exile. Only nine days later, on Yud-Beis-Tammuz, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was informed that he was free to return home.

In his talk, the Rebbe explained that the events of Gimmel-Tammuz did not make much of a tangible difference to the Chassidim, for they were just as cut off from their Rebbe as ever. Yet, they still celebrated his salvation; this represents the love of a Chossid to his Rebbe. The events of Yud-Beis-Tammuz did not signify a marked difference for the Rebbe, for his life had already been spared. Yet, he still celebrated his

imminent reunion with his Chassidim; this represents the love of a Rebbe to his Chossid.

Upon hearing Rabbi Lazaroff's response, the Rebbe instructed him to go to the reception, and to bring along a bottle of Mashke (spirits). He was to convey the above-mentioned explanation of Gimmel-Tammuz to Mr Shazar, and to share a L'Chaim with him.

Mr Shazar arrived at the reception, and took a seat. Not long afterwards, Rabbi Lazaroff arrived. As soon as Mr Shazar saw him enter the room, he immediately put on his hat and stood up. Rabbi Lazaroff realized that Mr Shazar was waiting for him, so he immediately walked over to Mr Shazar - who greeted him with a big hug, even though he had never seen Rabbi Lazaroff before! Mr Shazar immediately asked in Yiddish, "Vos Macht der Rebbe" ("How is the Rebbe"). Rabbi Lazaroff answered the question, gave him regards from the Rebbe, and added that he had some words to share about the significance of Gimmel-Tammuz. Mr Shazar interrupted him, "You mean Yud-Beis Tammuz!" [Mr Shazar was aware that Yud-Beis Tammuz was a day of celebration in Chabad, but he was not yet familiar with Gimmel-Tammuz.] Rabbi Lazaroff responded, "No, I meant Gimmel-Tammuz, but my words also relate to Yud-Beis-Tammuz." Rabbi Lazaroff proceeded to convey the Rebbe's teaching regarding the significance of these two dates. Mr Shazar listened intently, and tears began forming in his eyes. Such was his love for the Rebbe!

As Rabbi Lazaroff concluded, he poured a L'Chaim from the small bottle of Mashke that he had brought with him, as per the Rebbe's instructions. Mr Shazar promptly made a blessing, and added – before drinking – "L'Chaim, Der Rebbe Zol Zein Gezunt!" ("L'Chaim, the Rebbe should be healthy!") Mr Shazar then introduced Rabbi Lazaroff to everyone at the reception, and said, "Lubavitch is everywhere, even 'Ad Bli Yare'ach' (which can be loosely translated as 'everywhere but the moon')." The thought crossed Rabbi Lazaroff's mind that this was an unusual way of describing the proliferation of Chabad, but did not pay further attention to it.

As the reception ended, Mr Shazar mentioned to Rabbi Lazaroff that he would be spending some time in New York on his way back from Mexico to Israel, and he asked whether Rabbi Lazaroff could arrange a Yechidus with the Rebbe.

Immediately after the reception, Rabbi Lazaroff called New York and spoke to Rabbi Hodakov. He relayed all the events that had occurred and Mr Shazar's request for a Yechidus. Rabbi Hodakov listened silently, and merely responded, "I hear."

Two days before Yud-Beis-Tammuz, Rabbi Lazaroff received a telephone call from Rabbi Hodakov, who asked whether Rabbi Lazaroff was planning to fly in to New York to celebrate Yud-Beis-Tammuz. Rabbi Lazaroff had in fact not been planning to do so, but with a question like that, he immediately responded in the affirmative. Upon Rabbi Lazaroff's arrival in New York, Rabbi Hodakov informed him that he was invited to attend a special Yechidus which had been arranged between the Rebbe and Mr Shazar, which was scheduled for Yud-Beis-Tammuz.

Mr Shazar arrived at 770 on Yud-Beis-Tammuz, and spend more than 12 hours with the Rebbe, first at Yechidus, and then at the public Farbrengen. During the Yechidus, the Rebbe pointed out Rabbi Lazaroff and said to Mr Shazar, "This is the yungerman who told me you were coming to me. His name is Shimon Lazaroff, named after his grandfather who was the Rav in Leningrad. Rabbi Lazaroff is now in Houston, from where they travel to the moon. Houston can therefore rightfully be called 'shaar hashamayim' (the gate of heaven).

Share your Yeshivah Gedolah memories: news@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au.