



The YG Connection

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In this Issue:

Pesach in the Far East

Farbrengen:
Overcoming obstacles

Lag B'Omer 5772

Passover Australia

Pesach 5772 saw groups of students travel to many parts of Australia.



The students arranged seders, offered guidance and encouragement, and provided religious items. The Passover Australia 5772 annual report is currently available at:

RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/Passover.

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:

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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 Shovuos, and may be viewed at: RabbinicalCollege.edu.au/Heoros

Submissions for the next edition may be emailed to: heoros@rabbinicalcollege.edu.au

PESACH IN THE FAR EAST

Six students of the Rabbinical College recently visited the Far East to help conduct Pesach activities for Jews based in these countries. A brief account of their experiences is presented below, and on the back page.

PESACH IN SHENZHEN, CHINA *By Ephraim Block and Eli Einbinder*

Shenzhen is a major city in south China, situated immediately north of Hong Kong. By Chinese standards, Shenzhen is a modern city with a vibrant economy, and is extremely popular with foreign business people and visitors. It was to Shenzhen that we headed, to help the local Chabad Shliach (emissary), Rabbi Sholom Ben Chazan, conduct programs for Pesach.

Enroute from Melbourne, we stopped in Hong-Kong for several days, in order to obtain entry visas into Mainland China. We made sure that our time in Hong-Kong was not wasted. One particular highlight was meeting an Israeli at the world-class tourist attraction known locally as The Peak, a summit which offers stunning panoramic views of Hong-Kong. The Israeli quite happily put on Tefillin, marvelling that he was doing it at The Peak.

We arrived in Shenzhen shortly before Pesach, and quickly got involved in the last minute Pesach preparations. We played an important role at the Seder, because the non-English-speaking Shliach could not really communicate with the English-speaking segment of the two-hundred strong crowd. We relayed several Divrei Torah, and we tried as best as possible to personally interact with the Seder participants.

At the first Seder, an American conversing with Ephraim got to talking about how obsessed he was with playing tennis. Before long, he was challenging Ephraim to a game. The game took place after Yom-Tov, with Ephraim soundly defeating his opponent. The American was so impressed that a Yeshiva student was as skilled on the court as he is with his Jewish studies that he donated 1,000 Renminbi (the local Chinese currency) to Chabad.

On the same night, Eli spent some quality time with two people visiting from Toronto. They were so inspired that they cancelled their trip to Beijing the following day, in order to stay in Shenzhen for the second Seder.

At the second Seder, Ephraim introduced himself to a guest from Atlanta. When he heard that Ephraim was from Australia, the Atlantan remarked that he had recently visited some coun-

ins in Perth. Although Ephraim was quite sure that he knew nobody in Perth, he nevertheless asked who the cousin was. The Atlantan responded that his own name was Simon Mattis (not his real name), and that his cousin was Shawn Mattis (also not his real name). Ephraim could not believe his ears; he had visited Shawn for several years on his weekly Friday Mivtzoym route in Melbourne, before Shawn had moved to Perth. What Hashgocha Protis (Divine intervention)!

During Chol Hamoed (the intermediate days of Pesach), we were travelling on a train when a local Chinese woman noticed us and came over. We were absolutely floored when we saw what she pulled out of her purse – a pocket Tehillim with a picture of the Rebbe on the front cover. She had received it from a friend who advised her to carry it around constantly. We tried to convince her to give us the Tehillim, in order to ensure that its sanctity be preserved in accordance with the applicable Halachos (Jewish laws). However, she firmly insisted that it remain with her; she could not imagine being without it.

As Pesach drew to a close, we conducted a Kinus Torah, delighting the audience with insights, stories and Divrei Torah.

On the day after Pesach, we visited a local park which is a popular hangout for the local Israeli families. We spoke with a number of them, and we put Tefillin on one of the men. On our way back to the Chabad House, we made a last-minute detour via the pier. Sitting in one of the coffee-shops was a family of South African tourists whom we had met at the Chabad House during Pesach. We sat down and farbrenged with them, although we were not successful in convincing them to put on Tefillin.

Eventually, we had to return to the Chabad House to ready ourselves for the return flight to Melbourne. As we were about to leave to the airport, in walked Jonas, a young teenager of French origin with whom we had become close friends. Jonas had come to say his goodbyes. He wanted our farewell to be special, so we had him wrapped in Tefillin in no time. It was the perfect way to conclude our inspiring stay on the Asian continent.





Overcoming obstacles



Rabbi Aharon Eliezer Ceitlin spent two years at the Yeshivah Gedolah in Melbourne, where he served as a member of the fourth Kevutzah (group) of Shluchim (the Lubavitcher Rebbe's emissaries). Today, he serves as a Shliach in Tzfat (Safed - Israel), and directs several Chabad-Lubavitch institutions. Below, he recounts how his determination to fulfil one of the Rebbe's directives overcame all obstacles:

In 1978, the Rebbe initiated a campaign to print an edition of Tanya in every country in the world. This directive was based on a teaching of the Baal Shem Tov, that Moshiach will come when the wellsprings of Chassidic teachings spread worldwide. Printing the Tanya in every location would transform that place into a source and bastion of Chassidic teachings. Furthermore, when a Jew realizes that an edition of Tanya was printed in his city, he will be more enthusiastic about studying it.

When the Lebanon War broke out in the summer of 1982, the Rebbe directed Rabbi Leibel Kaplan נ"ע, the head Shliach (emissary) of Tzfat – and an alumnus of the Rabbinical College – to print the Tanya in Lebanon. The Rebbe's instructions were quite specific, that the Tanya should be printed in at least three Lebanese cities that once had thriving Jewish populations, and which were currently occupied by the IDF. The directive was to print the Tanya in all of these places, regardless of how many copies were printed.

Immediately upon receiving these instructions, Rabbi Kaplan formed a committee to begin putting the plan into action. It was relatively easy for us to procure the equipment, which included a van, an electrical generator, a printing press, and the printing plates of Tanya. However, it was much harder to obtain a permit from the IDF allowing us to enter the war zone in southern Lebanon. Rabbi Kaplan asked various influential Chabad figures to use their connections to obtain the necessary permit. They received a number of assurances, but the permit did not eventuate.

Meanwhile, we began receiving nightly calls from Mazkirus (the Rebbe's secretariat), requesting an update. This extraordinary sign of the Rebbe's interest in the matter obviously encouraged us to work even harder. At the same time, we became more and more dejected as we realized that we were not any closer to fulfilling the Rebbe's wish.

It came to a point where we really did not know what to do. We had received numerous assurances that we would get a permit, but the fact remained that we didn't. We couldn't help feeling that we were being given the run-around. In desperation, Rabbi Kaplan suggested that we just

drive to the border without a permit, and try to get into Lebanon.

We set out on a Thursday afternoon, and we arrived at the border after an hour of driving. We got out of our vehicle, and immediately began doing what Chabad does best. We said L'Chaim with the soldiers at the border, and sang and danced with them. The soldiers enthusiastically participated in our activities. But, when we tried to continue travelling north, their demeanour changed. They made it very clear that there was no way for us to proceed without a permit.

Having no choice, we remained at the border. Each of us started focussing on a different mission; one of us put Tefillin on the soldiers going in and out of Lebanon, and another began signing up each soldier for their own letter in a Sefer Torah. I was given the task of trying to resolve the impasse. I immediately began making a series of free-of-charge calls from a row of telephones that the army had set up for the convenience of the soldiers going in and out of the war zone. There were times when I thought that I was making progress. However, after six hours, we still did not have the necessary permit. We left the border at 10:00pm and returned to Tzfat completely demoralized.

We reconvened as soon as we arrived back in Tzfat, and resolved to immediately set out to the headquarters of the IDF Northern Command, situated in an army base at the outskirts of Tzfat. We arrived before midnight, and waited as the sentry sought authorization from his superiors to admit us. After a couple of minutes, we were allowed into the base, and we presented our case before one of the officers. He was very cordial, and told us that he knew all about the Rebbe. He advised us to return the following day, for the Chief Military Rabbi of the IDF would be visiting the base. Perhaps he could help us.

We returned to Tzfat, yet again without the necessary permit. We disbanded, and naturally headed for bed. However, I was unable to fall asleep. It bothered me terribly that we had spent many days trying to fulfil the Rebbe's directive, and we had still not succeeded. The Rebbe's secretaries were calling every night, and we still did not have the good news that the Rebbe awaited. What was I doing in bed?

I immediately jumped out of bed, and quickly got dressed. I rushed over to the house of one of my colleagues, and pounded on his door. He eventually opened it, and I said, "Hurry, get dressed, we are returning to the headquarters of the Northern Command to meet the commanding general and demand a permit!" He responded, "Aharon Leizer, relax, it is past midnight. Go get some sleep." I could tell from the tone of his voice that he thought I had become unhinged due to the stress of recent days.

I responded, "I am going to the army base whether you join me or not. If you wish to have a share in our success, then come with me. If not, I will go myself, and the merit of successfully fulfilling the mission will be mine alone." He responded, "Nu, so go."

I got into my car and drove towards the army base. I was not even sure how I would get into the base. What would I tell the sentry? That I needed to get into the base to speak to the general at 1:30 in the morning, in wartime, so that I could print some books?

I zoomed towards the army base at high speed, and screeched to a abrupt stop. I jumped out of the car and yelled at the sentry, "Where is the general? Quick, tell me where is the general? I need to speak to him!" The sentry must have thought this was a real emergency, and he immediately opened the gate for me and pointed out the general's quarters. I still can't believe that this happened; it was nothing short of miraculous. I have visited the army on hundreds of occasions, and never was I admitted without the sentry first obtaining approval from his superiors.

Once inside the army base, I immediately headed to the general's building, even though I wasn't sure whether he was physically present at the base. The general's living quarters were upstairs, and his suite of offices was downstairs. I entered and told the secretary that I needed to speak to the general immediately.

She burst out laughing and responded, "Impossible. It is wartime, and the general is extremely busy".

I pleaded with her, "Please, I am not asking you to decide whether the general can meet me. Let the general decide that. Please inform him that someone from Chabad is here to see him urgently on an extremely important matter." However, my words fell on deaf ears; the secretary did not budge.

Out of sheer desperation, I told the secretary, "Just remember that I came to tell the general something extremely important and urgent – something relevant to the whole outcome of the war. And, just remember that it was you who did not allow me entry." When the secretary

heard these words, she became slightly anxious. She agreed to relay my message to the general, but not before assuring me that there was no chance that he would agree to see me.

When she returned, she told me to wait; the general would see me shortly. I pinched myself to make sure that I wasn't dreaming. I waited until the general sent for me. I climbed the stairs, with the secretary following closely behind. When I came face to face with the general, I could see that he was exhausted and tense. He was not exactly in the type of mood I had hoped to find him.

For lack of a better way to start the conversation, I remarked that it looked like the general had not



Printing the Tanya in Sidon



Tefillin with soldiers in the war zone



Lag B'Omer 5772

This past Lag B'Omer, students of the Rabbinical College celebrated at the Chabad House of Benteigh, which is directed by Rabbi Mendel Raskin. The Bochorim were served a barbecue dinner, which was followed by dancing and a Chassidische Kumzits (sing-a-long) around the bonfire.

Afterwards, the Bochorim moved indoors for a farbrengen led by the head Mashpia of Yeshivah Gedolah, Rabbi Yaakov Winner. Special thanks to the Shluchim for organizing the event, and to Chabad of Benteigh for hosting the event.



slept that night. The general snapped back, "Not just one night – I haven't slept for several nights!"

At that point, the secretary asked whether she could remain at the meeting. She wanted to hear my message to the general, and what was so urgent about it. I jokingly replied that my message was classified as a military secret, and only the general could hear it. When the general heard this, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. He laughed and laughed, and it took him a moment or two to compose himself. When he did, he seemed a lot calmer and friendlier. Of course, the secretary was allowed to stay as well.

I turned to the general and said, "Listen, I would like to present a matter which I feel affects the whole outcome of the war. I hope the general will view it as such. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, the leader of the generation, has requested that the Tanya be printed in Lebanon. Why? Don't ask me; I am not the Rebbe. However, I can say that Tanya is the seminal work of Chabad, and that the Rebbe has arranged for it to be printed all over the world. If he wants it done in Lebanon, it is obviously of utmost importance." I went on to tell the general about several incidents where the Rebbe had issued a directive whose purpose was not understood at the time, but which became clear in hindsight. For example, I told the general how the Rebbe had directed his followers in Israel to organize mass prayer rallies of children in September 1973. No one understood why, until the Yom Kippur war broke out shortly after. I also showed the general several Tanyas that had been printed in cities around the globe.

When I finished my fifteen minute speech, the general asked, "Nu, so what do you want from me". I explained that we needed a permit to get into Lebanon. He said, "No problem, you have my permission to enter Lebanon". I immediately responded that I needed the permit in writing. The general said, "No problem." He picked up the phone and instructed the officer at the other end to write out a permit for us to enter Lebanon. Over the phone, I could hear the officer respond,

"To where in Lebanon?" I thought, "Oh no, I forgot to tell the general that the first printing will occur in the city of Tzor (Tyre)". Based on the Rebbe's directives, we had decided to print in the cities of Tzor, Tzidon (Sidon) and Beirut, and we had chosen Tzor to be first. To my great relief and amazement, the general responded, "You know what? Allow them to travel until Tzor."



Permit into Lebanon

The meeting was now almost over; successful beyond my wildest imagination. I thanked the general, and I asked for his and his mother's names, so that I could forward it to the Rebbe for his blessing. He responded that I should just tell the Rebbe that the IDF Commander of the North had provided the permit.

I headed to a nearby building to obtain the permit. A young officer opened the door, and immediately asked whether I was a Chabadnik. I replied in the affirmative. He got all excited and immediately started exclaiming "En Kemo Chabad" ("there is none like Chabad"). Sitting around the room were several soldiers unwinding from their long day. The officer hustled them to their feet and led them in a dance around me to the tune of Uforatzto. Then, the officer excitedly began recounting how Chabad had helped him on a recent trip to Paris, tending to both his physical and spiritual needs. I listened to him for a couple of minutes, but then I steered the discussion to the matter of the permit. Of course, it was helpful that my "business partner" was such an avid fan of Chabad.

The officer asked, "When do you want to go to Lebanon?" I replied, "Right now". The officer

responded, "Impossible". I immediately started to panic, thinking that the officer was trying to withhold the permit unnecessarily. However, I needn't have worried. The officer explained that we could not enter Lebanon in the middle of the night, but that we could enter after 4:00am. This suited me quite well; it left me with just enough time to get back to Tzfat and round up my colleagues for the hour-long drive to the border.

The officer then asked if we had weapons. Of course, we Chabadniks were without weapons. I started to panic again, worrying that the officer would refuse the permit if we were defenceless. I hastily tried to explain that no harm befalls agents performing a Mitzvah. The officer grinned broadly when he heard my explanation, and he told me that it was not good enough. My panic increased. However, the officer reassured me, "Not to worry. At 4:00 in the morning, be at the border, and I will have an army escort prepared for you; four soldiers on an armoured jeep."

With that, he reached over to a pile of cards which had been pre-signed by one of the Deputy-Generals of the Northern Command. The officer filled in all the details, and he added just above the signature, "Please help these men of Chabad as much as possible". He handed the permit to me. For the second time that evening, I pinched myself to make sure that I wasn't dreaming.

I was delirious with joy. I immediately drove back to Tzfat to round up all the members of our group. When I woke them with the news that I had a permit, they thought I was out of my mind. But there was no denying that I had the permit in my hand, and we quickly set out to the border.

The small group of emissaries entered Lebanon, and their successful mission served as the catalyst for many more Chabad missions into the war-zone of Lebanon. We hope that Rabbi Ceitlin will tell us more about these next time he farbrengs at Yeshivah Gedolah.



PESACH IN SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA *By Dovid Goldenberg and Sholom Meyer*



With Pesach around the corner, we called the various Chabad Shluchim (emissaries) in Asia to offer our services. It turned out that Rabbi Osher Litzman, in Seoul, needed lots of help with his Pesach activities. We concluded our conversation, and began organizing our travel plans.

As we were due to land in Seoul shortly after midnight, Rabbi Litzman suggested that we take an airport shuttle to a hotel situated a short five minute walk from his house. Little did we know that the shuttle did not run after 10:00pm.

When realization struck, we really did not know what to do. We were exhausted after the long international flight, and weighed down with luggage. There was no available transportation for hire, not even taxis. There were no public telephones in sight, and it wouldn't have mattered if there were, because we did not have Rabbi Litzman's phone number with us. We couldn't even approach anyone for help in this country where almost no one speaks English. We were out of ideas. To the few people remaining in the airport, we were a most curious sight to behold.

Out of nowhere, a Korean appeared and spoke to us in English. Yes, English. Most Koreans can't communicate in English, but this guy was fluent! The Korean's first word was, "Shalom!" Wow! He knew we were Jewish, and he even spoke a bit of

Hebrew! Of course, we looked Jewish, but that wouldn't have meant much to someone unfamiliar with Jews – including most Koreans.

We soon discovered that we were talking to a Korean who loves Jews. He offered to take us wherever we needed to go. We were a bit apprehensive, but the guy seemed genuine, and we really had no other choice. Besides, we were on the Rebbe's Shlichus, and we were sure that things would work out for the best. We got into his car, and arrived at the Chabad House at 3:00 in the morning, where Rabbi Litzman was anxiously awaiting us.

We woke up early the next morning to a most interesting surprise. Although Pesach was only three days away, the preparations at the Chabad House had not yet begun. The reason for this became apparent soon enough. From early morning to late evening, there was a steady stream of people flowing through the Chabad House doors. Many of the visitors sought Rabbi Litzman's guidance, and some came to sell their Chometz and the like. The Chabad House is also the only place in South Korea where imported Kosher food can be obtained, and the week before Pesach was naturally a very busy time.

Under those conditions, it was impossible for Rabbi Litzman to prepare for Pesach single-handedly. For the next three days, we worked the entire time, cooking and cleaning. When the Chabad House filled with visitors, we made everyone feel welcome, and put Tefillin on many of the guests.

When Seder night arrived, Rabbi Litzman quickly realized that the crowd was mostly English-speaking. Not much of an English speaker himself, Rabbi Litzman asked us to lead the Seder, and he offered to help from the sidelines.

There were about seventy participants at the first

Seder, and almost sixty at the second. As the Seder progressed, we sang and danced, and there was an unmistakable vibe and a strong feeling of unity. After Yom-Tov, the Chabad House received many calls thanking us for our efforts, and for providing such an incredible experience.

During Chol Hamoed (the intermediate days of Pesach), we travelled all the way to the border of North Korea. Our goal was to connect with even the most far-flung Jew. Wherever we went, we received a lot of perplexed stares from people who were wondering just who or what we were. Korean culture regards beards as unrefined and socially unacceptable, and some Koreans went so far as to rebuke us (in Korean) whilst gesturing towards our beards. [Other curiosities of Korean culture include the prevalence of facial masks to combat the pollution, mobile phones the size of iPads, and restaurant signs advertising dog meat and whale meat.]

Of course, our conspicuousness worked to our advantage. We were quickly and easily noticed by any Jew who happened to be in the vicinity. Nearly seven million tourists pour into Korea every single year, and many of them are Jews. We also met Jewish soldiers in the U.S. military. Most of the people we met did not even know that there was a Chabad presence in Korea, and that Kosher food could be obtained there.

On one of our travels, a Korean gentleman stopped us in the street and presented us with his dilemma: He did a lot of business with Israelis, and he always felt bad that he did not have Kosher food available when he hosted them in Korea – even though the Israelis themselves did not seem to care. Of course, we told him all about the Kosher store at the Chabad House. He promised us that he would stock up and henceforth provide Kosher food for his Israeli guests in the future.



PESACH IN TAIPEI, TAIWAN *By Mordechai Gutnick and Zalman Plotke*



We very much wanted to devote our Pesach break to reaching out and helping fellow Jews connect with Yiddishkeit. We heard that the Chabad Shliach (emissary) in Taipei, Rabbi Shlomi Tabib, was looking for help. We quickly contacted him and volunteered.

Jewish life in Taipei has been undergoing a transformation under the leadership of Rabbi Tabib. Before Rabbi Tabib's arrival less than a year ago, the local Jews didn't mingle much with each other, except on certain Jewish holidays and special occasions. In fact, when Rabbi Tabib initially inquired about the size of the Jewish population of Taipei, he was told that there were no more than two-hundred. Since his arrival, Rabbi Tabib has already met several hundred Jewish residents who had previously been unaf-

filiated with the existing Jewish community. He also tends to the spiritual needs of the Jewish tourists and travellers who pass through.

We flew to Taiwan on 11 Nissan, which marks the anniversary of the Rebbe's birthday. Rabbi Tabib met us at the airport, and we were quickly introduced to the new culture when the Rabbi flagged down a taxi and began bargaining with the driver over what must have been less than two Australian dollars. Over the next several days, we helped Rabbi Tabib with Pesach shopping, cooking and preparations.

In the past, the Jewish community in Taiwan would conduct an annual Pesach event at the Sheraton Hotel, although it could not really be described as a Pesach Seder. In fact, the menu at these events typically included such items as bread rolls and swordfish. The assimilated Jewish community simply did not know better.

This Pesach – Rabbi Tabib's first in Taipei – was different. Rabbi Tabib arranged for the annual community event to be fully Kosher for Pesach, and he organized Matzah and other traditional Seder foods. To that end, we spent two full days at the Sheraton kitchens, making sure it was Kosher for Pesach, and supervising the chefs. The kitchen staff found all the nuances of Kosher quite confusing. They made a number of mistakes, some of which required us to re-Kosher some parts of the kitchen.

Aside from the community event, Rabbi Tabib arranged another Seder at his home for those interested in a more traditional Seder. On the first night of Pesach, Rabbi Tabib attended the community event and infused it with as much Yiddishkeit as possible. At the same time, we conducted the Seder at Rabbi Tabib's house for a crowd of Israeli and American businessmen and students. By the end of the evening, even the most nonchalant attendees were enthusiastically singing all the Seder songs.

Since there was no community event the second night, Rabbi Tabib led the Seder at his home. It was amazing to watch the diverse crowd of Americans and Israelis – ranging from company CEOs to college students – merge into one cohesive and joyous group.

The rest of Pesach was focussed on individual outreach with local Jews. Just walking the streets was itself an experience. With our hats and beards and Jewish looks, we did not exactly blend into the crowd of pedestrians. This was a good thing, because we became like walking magnets, attracting many Jews who were so excited to see "Chabadnikim" where they would least expect it. This made our job all the more easier. The non-Jews were curious as well, with many of them taking pictures of us.

This year in Taiwan; next year in Jerusalem!

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