

MTc MOSAIC

A PUBLICATION OF THE MONTREAL TORAH CENTER BAIS MENACHEM CHABAD LUBAVITCH
JOANNE AND JONATHAN GURMAN COMMUNITY CENTER • LOU ADLER SHUL

Spring · Passover
5766/2006



BAIS MENACHEM
CHABAD LUBAVITCH

Gleanings

From the Rebbe's wisdom



Rebuke



By the time Moses returned to the scene, his people had hit an all time low.



Perhaps he should have told them off, saying, "Repent, sinners, lest you perish altogether!"



But he didn't. Instead, he told them how G-d cared for them and felt their suffering, how He would bring about miracles, freedom and a wondrous future out of His love for them.



As for rebuke, Moses directed that... to G-d. "Why have you mistreated your people?!" he demanded.



If you don't like the other guy's lifestyle, do him a favor, lend him a hand.



Once you've brought a few miracles into his life, then you can urge him to chuck his bad habits.

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Freedom. Suddenly, a term so passé, a way of life so taken for granted, is back in the headlines.

We, in the 'free world', had for decades stood at the sidelines of history and watched it unfold elsewhere. Now we are back in the thick of it; Israel and the Jew at the vortex of it all. The war is on, the world is the battlefield, and the sides have been drawn - terror and tyranny versus freedom.

This new, yet ancient confrontation, compels us to re-examine the origin and meaning of freedom. And so the holiday of Pesach, so familiar and so predictable, takes on a new meaning and relevance.

Pesach marks the birth of the children of Israel as a free people. The biblical notion of freedom is what inspired the American and British revolutions and thus became the bedrock for the world's strongest free and democratic societies.

Yet, freedom and democracy, per se, do not assure a just and benevolent society where equal rights are respected. The recent democratic elections in Gaza are ample proof of that. And, if one requires more examples from history, the election of Hitler to power through the democratic process should suffice...

When G-d first revealed himself to Moses and charged him with a mission to bring the Jews out of Egypt, He made it clear that the exodus is not an end in itself. Rather, the purpose of the exodus was to arrive at Sinai and 'Serve Me on that mountain!'

In other words, physical liberation from bondage does not mean freedom. For, inevitably, the emancipation from physical slavery will give way to bondages and restrictions of another kind - slavery to one's own weaknesses and behavioral patterns that are not only *self*-destructive but, in one form or another, wreak havoc on others.

True freedom then, is achieved through the transcendence of the very self. But how indeed can one go beyond self? How is it possible to be anything other than what we are? The answer, of course, is through connection to Him. Only therein lies the connection to truly objective values and morality, and hence a kind of freedom that is not only immutable, but equally immune to human abuse.

This global struggle which, whether we like it or not, revolves around the Jew and the State of Israel, will not be won on political grounds or by military might alone. The fact is, that Islam is rooted in Judaism - in the Torah. Torah then, is the only place where the distortion and corruption of Islam can be addressed. It is a spiritual battle, with devastating physical consequences, which we are engaged in, and it is in the realm of the spirit that the battle will be won. It is high time that our leadership understood this.

The Torah is the Torah of Truth. Its uncompromised message is universal. The world just needs to hear it. And they need to hear it from us. In the end, truth must triumph.

For G-d's sake; for our sake; for the world's sake, let's give it a chance.



Nechama, Itchy and Zeldie join me in wishing you, in the words of our hallowed tradition, 'a kosher and freilichin - joyous - Pesach!'

This year in Jerusalem,

Rabbi Moishe New

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The Montreal Torah Center
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Make our Day

MTC is proud to launch a new initiative -
the opportunity to be an integral part of a day at MTC.

Each day of the year is available for sponsorship.

All MTC activities and programs on that particular day
are attributed to that day's sponsor.

The sponsorship may, for example, be dedicated
in honour of an anniversary, birthday or yarzeit.

Each sponsorship will be recognized on our website;
in our weekly Mosaic Express and in the Mosaic Magazine.

The sponsorship amount is \$1800 per day, and will be billed annually,
creating a consistent form of annuity that will contribute
to MTC's financial stability.

Please call Itchy at 739-0770.

LOU AND JOEY ADLER LEARNING INSTITUTE SPRING COURSE-SCHEDULE

SUNDAY

8:15 – 9:00 am

Rashi Sichos

In-depth textual study of the Rebbe's Rashi sichos.
Instructor: Rabbi New

9:40 – 10:00 am

Living Torah

Screening of a DVD magazine on the weekly Torah portion.

MONDAY

6:45 – 7:25 am

Parsha

Textual study related to the weekly Torah portion.
Instructor: Rabbi Moishe New

8:15 – 9:00 am

Talmud

Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

12:30 – 1:30 pm

Lunch and Learn DR. JACOB TINK

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

7:30 – 8:30 pm

Basic Talmud

Textual study of Talmud.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

TUESDAY

6:45 – 7:25 am

Parsha

Textual study related to the weekly Torah portion.
Instructor: Rabbi New

8:20 – 9:00 am

Likutei Torah

Chassidic discourses by the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

12:00 – 1:00 pm

Lunch and Learn S.P. DIAMENT

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

12:10 – 1:10 pm

Lunch & Learn – 6 week courses

Please call our office for topics and to register.
Instructor: Rabbi New

7:00 – 8:00 pm

Tanya

The primary, classic work of Chabad chassidus – a blend of mysticism, philosophy & psychology.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

TUESDAY CONT'D

8:00 – 8:45 pm

Living Jewishly

The basics of Jewish life.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

8:45 – 9:45 pm

Chassidus

In-depth, textual study, selected from the broad-based array of Chassidic writings. Accordingly, subject matter varies.
For women.
Instructor: Rabbi New

WEDNESDAY

10:30 – 11:30 am

Women's Torah Class

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi New

12:00 – 1:00 pm

Lunch and Learn MARTINI PRODUCTIONS

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

12:00 – 1:00 pm

Lunch and Learn

Diesel/Seymour Alper/Cissi alternatively
A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi New

8:00 – 9:00 pm

Simply Divine

Kabbalistic wisdom for negotiating life. No previous background necessary.
Instructor: Rabbi New
sponsored by the
MIRYAM & BATYA MEDICOFF
LECTURE FOUNDATION

8:30 – 10:00 pm

Advanced Talmud

Textual study of Talmud with commentaries.
For men. Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

THURSDAY

6:00 – 7:00 am

Chassidus

In-depth, textual study, selected from the broad-based array of Chassidic writings. Accordingly, subject matter varies.
Instructor: Rabbi New

12:30 – 1:30 pm

Lunch & Learn LISAK GROUP

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi New

THURSDAY CONT'D

1:00 – 2:00 pm

Understanding Davening

Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

2:00 – 3:00 pm

What is the Torah?

An overview of the Talmud, Mishna, Midrash etc. Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

8:30 – 9:30 pm

Torah Class

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
In private homes.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

8:30 – 9:30 pm

Jewish Philosophy

For university students. Alternate Thursdays.
Instructor: Rabbi New

FRIDAY

6:00 – 7:00 am

Chassidus

In-depth, textual study, selected from the broad-based array of Chassidic writings. Accordingly, subject matter varies.
Instructor: Rabbi New

8:15 – 9:00 am

Talmud

Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan
12:00 – 1:00 pm

Lunch & Learn C & C PACKING

A discussion on: the Torah portion of the week, current events or holidays.
Instructor: Rabbi New

SHABBOS

8:00 – 9:00 am

Chassidus

In-depth, textual study, selected from the broad-based array of Chassidic writings. Accordingly, subject matter varies.
Instructor: Rabbi New

Forty-five minutes before Mincha Tanya

The primary, classic work of Chabad chassidus – a blend of mysticism, philosophy & psychology.
For women.
Instructor: Rabbi New

One and a half hours before Mincha Talmud

For men. Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

Half an hour before Mincha Halacha

Textual study of Jewish law. For men.
Instructor: Rabbi Kaplan

Next Year in Jerusalem...Really!

by ARON MOSS
Reprinted with permission
from Chabad.org

Question:

Here's one I always wanted to know. We traditionally end the Passover Seder with the wish, "Next Year in Jerusalem!" What if you're living in Jerusalem? Do you say, "This year in Jerusalem!", or just leave that line out?



Answer:

You can be miles away from Jerusalem even while living there. And you can be on the other side of the world but only a step away. Because Jerusalem is much more than a city. It's an ideal that we are struggling to reach.

*You can be miles away
from Jerusalem even
while living there.*

The Jewish story can be summed up as a long journey from Egypt to Jerusalem. Beyond being just geographical locations, they symbolize two opposite spiritual states. The journey from Egypt to Jerusalem is a spiritual odyssey. Both as a nation and as individuals, we have always been leaving the slavery of Egypt and heading towards the freedom of the Promised Land. By analyzing the psychological Egypt and the inner Jerusalem, we will see how this is a road that we are still traveling.

The Hebrew name for Egypt is *Mitzrayim*, which means limitations, restrictions, obstacles. It represents a state in which our souls are trapped in our bodies, enslaved to material desires and tied down to physical limitations. It is a world in which righteousness, justice and holiness are held captive to corruption, selfishness and egotism.

Jerusalem means "the city of peace" – a place of peace between body and soul, heaven and earth,

the ideal and reality. When our body becomes not a prison for the soul but rather a vehicle for the soul's expression; when we live our lives according to our ideals rather than our cravings; when the world values goodness and generosity over selfish gain, then we are in Jerusalem, we are at peace with ourselves and the world.

Imagine you are in your car, stuck in heavy traffic. You are late for an important meeting, and you see someone struggling to enter your lane from a side street. You are faced with a choice: to be kind and let them in, or to remain preoccupied with your own pressing needs and drive on.

If you do not allow them in, justifying yourself by thinking of how late you are, then you're still in Egypt; your selfishness has overtaken your goodness.

If you overcome your concern for your own needs and let them in, you have just left Egypt. You allowed your innate goodness to prevail over your instinctive selfishness. You're out of Egypt, but you're not yet in Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem, you would automatically want to let them in. Your important meeting would pale into insignificance in comparison with an opportunity to do a favour for another person. You wouldn't have to conquer your selfish nature; your nature would itself be kind and selfless. There would be no need for a battle to do good in the city of inner peace; it would come naturally. I don't know about you, but I am not there yet.

The Jewish people were born in Egypt, in slavery. But they were told that on the other side of a vast desert lies their destiny, their Promised Land. As our forefathers walked out of Egypt – 3317 years and some odd weeks ago – they were taking the first steps of a long journey to Jerusalem. Every generation since has pushed further forward along the road to Jerusalem. The journey continues with us. But we haven't got there yet. Even if you are living in the city called Jerusalem, as long as there remains suffering, injustice and unholiness in the world, we haven't reached the Promised Land. As long as we remain slaves to our own negative instincts and selfish desires, we are still struggling to truly leave Egypt.

As we sit at the Seder, we note that another year has gone by, and we have yet to complete the

journey. But we are getting there. We are that much closer to the Promised Land than we were last year. We have advanced a few more steps in a march to freedom that has spanned generations.

Perhaps this year, our efforts to better ourselves and our world will bring the fulfillment of the words of the Haggadah:

This year we are here, next year we will be in the Land of Israel. This year we are slaves, next year we will be free.

Next year in Jerusalem... literally. ■

Is this World all There Is?

Question:

Does Judaism believe in an afterlife? From what I've read of the Torah it seems that there is no mention of life after death. Is this world all there is?

Answer:

You have hit on one of the most powerful messages of Judaism: there may be many worlds, but this is the one that matters the most.

As you wrote, the Torah doesn't mention life after death. Although it is spoken about in the later prophets, the afterlife is conspicuously absent from the Five Books of Moses.

Having said that, there is certainly an indication that ultimate justice will be done someplace other than this world. A striking example is the story of Cain and Abel.

Cain and Abel bring offerings to G-d; G-d likes Abel's offering but not Cain's; Cain is jealous and kills Abel. End of story. But wait! In one line the Torah says that G-d is happy with Abel, the next minute he is dead! And Cain, who G-d wasn't happy with, walks away! Is this the reward for doing good?

The message is clear: this world is not always fair. But G-d will not remain indebted. Ultimate justice will come later.

So why doesn't the Torah mention the next world? Why is it left to later prophets to describe it?

Because the Torah is about this world, not the next. While other religions dangle exciting promises of what lies in store for the righteous in paradise, even giving vivid descriptions of who awaits you there and interesting facts about their biology, Judaism doesn't see this as a valid motive for doing good. G-d wants us to do good because it is good.

There is another lifetime in which the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished - we believe that, the prophets spoke about it. But that is G-d's business. We have to concern ourselves with this lifetime. Our mission is to do good, fight evil, and make this a safe and comfortable world - a place where both G-d and man can feel at home.

Without belief in an afterlife, there is no justice. The Cains of this world can get away with murder. But by over-emphasizing the importance of the afterlife over this life, we run the risk of belittling the sanctity and preciousness of life itself.

Judaism has a different approach: Better leave the next world to G-d; meanwhile let's work on this world. Starting with ourselves. ■



*From what I've read
of the Torah it seems
that there is no mention
of life after death.*

Jewish Teen Connection

Are you into THE Scene thing?

JTC IS THE PLACE TO BE!

"Because we get to meet a lot of new people and do really cool things."

- SARA GOLDBERG

"Because it's a program that applies to all types of girls regardless of their religious background. It's a night where we can hang out and have fun, because we learn in an interesting way that everyone can relate to!

It's a good learning experience and a great way to make new friends"

- JOELLE CHERNACK

"It's a great way to meet new people. It makes learning about Jewish heritage fun and interesting! It's also a time and place to relax and forget about school and just be yourself!"

- ERIN WILTZER

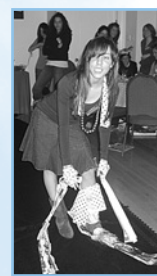


Stay tuned for:

May - Stretched-Limo race around Montreal!

June - Scrapbook your memories and frame it!

Get in touch with Rochel or Feigy at youth@themtc.com



MTC WISHES A HEARTY MAZELTOV TO

Jarrid and Joanna Adler on the birth
of their son, Lou, Eliezer Dovid

Evan and Osnat Feldman on the birth
of their son

Jason and Sherri Flam on the birth
of their daughter, Sarah

Jordana and Mitchell Greenspoon on the birth
of their daughter, Alexandra Fiona

Yirmiyahu and Chaya Harrison on the birth
of their daughter, Rochel

Zalman and Frayda Kaplan on the birth
of their daughter, Chana

Marc and Jill Kimmel on the birth
of their son, Nathan David

Lipa and Alexandra Lieberman on the birth
of their daughter, Leah

David and Carol Nathaniel on the birth
of their son

Shmarya and Lucy Plotkin on the birth
of their son

Avi and Estie Tansky on the birth
of their daughter, Baila

Yoram and Sara Bar on the engagement
of their daughter, Shelly to Razel Tabib

Philip and Ilana Fine on the engagement
of their son, David to Sandy Zeitoune

Betty Marer on the engagement
of her daughter, Candice to Robert Donsky

Jeff Rosen and Shlomit Montes
on their engagement

The Barnes, Shapiro and Sidel families
on the engagement of Noah and Casey

The Benhamouh family
on Yonatan's Bar Mitzvah

The Chochran and Puterman families
on Ovadia's Bar Mitzvah

The Eldor and Wilk families on the marriage
of Karin and Michael

Eric Howard and Stacey Letovksy
on their marriage

**Itchy and Zeldie Treitel on Ari's Bar Mitzvah
and the birth of their daughter, Doba Raiza**

MTC EXPRESSES ITS DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO

The Hutman, Glazer and Schick families
on the passing of Mr. Sam Hutman

Amy Farkas on the passing
of her mother, Mrs. Lee Williams

The Farkas and Greenspan families
on the passing of Mrs. Marilyn Farkas

Robert and Shari Kahan on the passing
of Shari's grandmother, Mrs. Bronia Kaporovsky

The Kimmel Family on the passing
of Mrs. Doris Kimmel

Renee Lieberman on the passing
of her father, Mr. Max Brooks

The Tansky and Lisak families on the passing
of Mr. Samuel Lisak

The Mitchnick family on the passing
of Mr. Bennie Mitchnick

Jerry Ostrega on the passing
of his father, Mr. David Ostrega

Chana Suss on the passing
of her father, Mr. Wolf (Ze'ev) Kincher

*May they be spared further sorrow
and know only of simchas.*

Mazeltovs • Sympathies

South African Queen

by JOANNIE TANSKY

"Hello, you have reached Chabad of Umhlanga. No one is here to take your call at the moment..."

You will know where Umhlanga is if you ever played the computer game 'Where in the world is Carmen San Diego.' Or you may know because you played geography in the car on endlessly long road trips. To end the mystery I'll tell you that Umhlanga (pronounced oomshlanga or in Zulu, mmmshlanga) is on the north coast of South Africa, near the city of Durban.



Driving up to Chabad of the North Coast

En Route

I want to know if I am the only one who travels with moments to spare between connecting flights. They are not booked this way, but things just happen...

My trip was Montreal (departing at 5:55 am), Atlanta, Johannesburg, Durban and then a car ride to my final destination.

Although I set my alarm for 3:30 am, I was afraid that 'oif zuloches', this one time, my trusty alarm clock would fail me. So I diligently stayed awake all night waiting for the moment I could sanely jump out of bed and get ready.

The airport at 4:30 am is, believe it or not, a bustling, vibrant and very awake place. I got to my gate at 5:15 expecting a quick boarding - after all, it was the first flight of the day and the weather was clear. But alas, other plans were in store for me. The person whose job it was to fill the plane with fuel was illiterate, inebriated or over enthusiastic in his duties and put 3,000 gallons of fuel in a fifty-seater plane.

We could not safely fly with that amount of fuel so three things transpired over the course of my one hour delay. In order to lighten the load of the plane, people were bumped, baggage was unloaded to another flight and some fuel was miraculously sucked out of the wings. I had not even left on my 18-hour journey and was already a wreck.

We finally took off at 7:00 am and were assured that those of us with connecting flights, as

mine at 10:30, would be fine. We were scheduled to arrive in Atlanta at 9:30 am where I would disembark from the plane, run up two flights of stairs to an escalator, which took me to a train that left us off in the next terminal. The problem was, at 9:30 another plane was sitting at our gate. So we sat till 9:45 and then I did the marathon to my next flight. By the time I reached my gate I felt as though I had been traveling for two days. My next thought was how in the world my new little burnt orange suitcase was going to get from terminal C to terminal A and onto my plane as fast as me. We'll see later...

Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

As I waited in line to board the plane there was an interesting assortment of people with me. One person in particular caught my eye. This gentleman looked to be the ultimate 'redneck' (remember, I was in Atlanta, home of the rednecks). Scruffy beard, mesh baseball cap, blue worker-man pants and a very red complexion. We finally boarded the plane and mercifully the flight was only half full, so I had two seats to myself. Guess who sat in the next row of seats beside me? Exactly, Mr. Red-Neck. We all got comfortable in our various locations and after puttering around I looked up to see most incredible sight. Mr. Red-neck was putting on tefillin! I nearly fainted. As the flight progressed and we got our kosher meals together, I sat speechless (although I really had no one to talk to) for a good while.

One comment about airline meals - isn't it incredible how one can get full from those mini-packed meals? Normally when I eat I take a dinner plate and while it's not overflowing, there's certainly food on the plate. Here I am, eating out of this mini-microwave dish (after a huge fight with it - which it won as I dropped some of the food on my lap) and it's filling me up! Time to downsize the dishes in my house.

Somewhere in the World

I lost total track of time. My watch said 1:00 am but as I had been traveling for a day and the time kept changing as we moved closer to South Africa, I didn't know whether I should be tired and sleep or stay awake and read. My questions were answered when the lights suddenly went on and we were informed that there would be a stop in a

*One person
in particular
caught my eye.*

place called Sal Island to change crews and refuel. If you didn't know where Umhlanga is, then Sal Island is an even bigger mystery. Sal Island is part of a group of islands (Cape Verde) in the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Senegal, in Western Africa. After leaving we were still 8 1/2 hours from my first destination, Johannesburg. I decided that sleep was the best choice.

On Route to Durban and the Luggage...

Alas, my brand new, burnt orange plaid suitcase never made it on the plane in Atlanta. Once I determined that I was now part of the 'lost luggage' group, I made my way to the special wicket and was informed that my bag went from Atlanta to JFK to Johannesburg and would eventually reach Durban. To complicate matters further, I had no idea where I was staying in Umhlanga as I was being picked up by the Chabad emissary and taken to my sweet little bed and breakfast. Ergo, I couldn't give a delivery address for the bag. That would have to be done at the lost luggage in Durban. Ah, the joys of traveling...

It was not difficult to spot Rabbi Shlomo Wainer at the Durban airport. He is the only visible Jew in all of Durban. After I gave the baggage claim my address, we hopped into his car (they drive on the opposite side of the road) and he gave me a short tour of Durban. It reminded me of a cross between Nice, France and Miami, but certainly has a flavor all of its own. As we were driving in the heart of downtown Durban, among the office towers and businesses, I spotted a large black woman, a huge, overflowing basket balanced on her head, her hot pink flowered dress billowing in the wind...

Chabad of the Northcoast

Nestled on a hill, overlooking the Indian Ocean is Chabad of the Northcoast. Rabbi Shlomo and Devorah Wainer, both from South Africa, have been Chabad emissaries for twelve years. Rabbi Wainer, or Shlomo, as his congregants all him, is one very busy person. He is the rabbi, fundraiser, psychologist, teacher and friend to over sixty families. He runs his brand new building from a bright air-conditioned office, his phone ringing incessantly.

The Wainers moved into their new place this past Rosh Hashana. The climate in Durban is sub-

tropical which allows for the Shabbos Kiddush to be held outdoors. However, Rabbi Wainer is at the tail end of completing a small hall to hold the Kiddush and a wedding, which by the time this article appears, will be up and running. It is beyond comforting to walk into his shul and see all the same books as we have in our shul. As he said to me, "You are home wherever you are in Chabad."

During one of our many conversations, he told me a bit about the Jewish community. As in most other places without a Jewish infrastructure – school and mikvah – there is a lot of assimilation. Here however, he encounters a problem I have not yet heard: When he asks someone if they are Jewish, the response will inevitably be – half Jewish or a quarter Jewish. I understood what he was saying, but could not believe that is how people actually responded until our visit to the supermarket.

While standing in line to check out, a young woman holding a small baby was behind us. She smiled at Rabbi Wainer and he, the amicable person that he is, smiled back and said how cute the baby was. The woman then proceeded to tell him that she knew him from somewhere. He asked if she was Jewish and she replied, "Well, I'm half Jewish. My grandmother and mother are Jewish but they were hidden Jews from Spain, so they never practiced. I'm catholic now. I married a catholic man." It took all my strength not to tell her that not only was she Jewish, but so is her daughter, Gabriella. Rabbi Wainer was cool and extremely welcoming. Obviously he had encountered this many times. He politely made small talk about a relative of hers that knew him and then gently suggested that she look him up in the phone book under J for Jewish.



Avremi Wainer



The 'gates' outside the Chabad house



The Indian Ocean as seen from the Wainer's home

South Africa

(cont'd)



Entering Hluhluwe



Me – terrified - in the Land Rover

The Phone and My Luggage

I have traveled to many, many places in the world, obviously using phones everywhere. But for some reason, I simply could not figure out how to use the public phone (no phones in the room) in my bed and breakfast, which posed, on my first night there, a huge problem...

I finally tracked down my bag, using Rabbi Wainer's cell phone.

They assured me that it would be delivered about 11:30 pm. I was ecstatic until Rabbi Wainer dropped me off. As I was going up to my room, called the Fisheagle, I realized that there was no way for the person delivering my bag to get into the 'gate'. Everything in South Africa is gated, meaning: a steel gate, electrified wires on the top and then barbed wire on top of that. I was exhausted from traveling

and it was only 8:00 pm. I would never be able to stay up and wait. So, I went around looking for a phone to call Rabbi Wainer and apprise him of my latest dilemma. I finally found an interesting looking pay phone in the bar but could not, for the life of me, figure out how to use it. As well, I had no rands (South African currency) to put into the coin box. I was standing on the beautiful veranda overlooking the ocean in a state of panic when a very nice, well-groomed gentleman emerged from nowhere asked if he could help me. "Do you have a phone?" I asked pleadingly. He looked at me like I fell out of a tree. "Here my dear, who would you like me to call for you?" I gave him Rabbi Wainer's cell number and after getting through explained my situation. What a guest I was turning out to be.

One more word about the bed and breakfast. The owner lives somewhere along the beach in Umhlanga. He's at the B and B during the day but at 6:00 pm goes home and locks up the whole place. Ergo every guest has five keys and a remote for the gate: a room key, front door key, safe key and two unidentifiable keys. The only way to find

someone to help at night is to ring the bell outside the gate and a woman, who lives somewhere on the property, will come out and see to your needs.

Back to my luggage. The kind gentleman, after overhearing my conversation (I guess I talked pretty loud) realized my dilemma, told me about the bell and then agreed to go downstairs and summon this elusive woman. She finally appeared and I told her my story. "No problem maam. I'll let him in." Whew! I went back to my room, lay down in my bed in the same clothes I had been wearing for two days and fell asleep.

At midnight there was a knock on my door. "Maam, your bag is here." She laughed. "Behind you maam, in your room, the man's on the balcony. Open the door for him." First of all, I didn't know there was a balcony. Second of all, I wasn't opening anything for anyone at midnight. I invited her in, she dressed in a towel and something on her head, to open the door. Low and behold – my bag! Baruch Hashem! She left by the door, the man left by the balcony and I began to unpack. Ten minutes later I heard a knock on the balcony door. *Can we talk?* Can I tell you how I almost fainted from fright? "Maam", said the man through the door, "can you open the gate for me. I can't get out." (This gate is turning out to be the bane of my existence.) It turned out that customs went through my bag, i.e. ransacked it and absconded with my trusty little radio, which travels with me all over the world. Oh well.

One more thing about my cute little room. The next morning I was puttering around and came upon the bed-and-breakfast information book. Imagine my surprise when I got to the last page and read the following: 'Do not leave your windows open. Monkeys will be able to climb in, and once in your room they are vicious, looking for food and destroying everything in their path.' Can I tell you how hot it was even with the ceiling fan? I never, not once, opened that window.

The Safari

I had booked a safari from Montreal via the internet and Rabbi Wainer. As it turns out, I was the only person taking this particular tour – my luck. I was to going to be picked up at the infamous gate by someone called Melody and driven

At midnight

there was a knock

on my door.

two and a half hours to the game reserve called Hluhluwe, pronounced shishlouie.

Melody turned out to be a fun, well-educated native Durbanite. She had been an official tour guide since 1994 and really new her stuff. As we drove along the highway, very unnervingly on the 'wrong side', she explained that we were in one of the nine provinces of South Africa, Kwazulu Natal, which means Kingdom of the Zulu. Kwazulu province borders Mozambique and Swaziland. It has the largest population of all the provinces with 9.1 million people. The province's capital city is Durban. Situated on the coast, Durban's port is the busiest in Sub-Saharan Africa and one of the ten largest in the world.

The main language is Zulu, spoken by 80% of the population, followed by English, 15% and Afrikaan, 1.6%. (The other 8 provinces are: Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Nipumlanga, Northwest and Limpopo.)

The coastline of the province is subtropical and it's long beaches with inviting warm water (Indian Ocean) are popular tourist attractions, in addition to containing magnificent examples of indigenous forests.

As we drove along I remarked on the many clusters of round, thatched huts that dotted the countryside. Melody explained that they were the homes of the native Zulus. These people live with no electricity, no running water, no government infrastructure and no public transportation, which attested to the constant stream of people walking along the highway. She told me that they walk for miles every day to get to work, to go for water or to go to the markets. Until eleven years ago almost none of the 9 million Zulus went to school, leaving them totally uneducated and illiterate. Nelson Mandella then passed a law enforcing schooling. But with the lack of transportation and money, this law is still a dream.

Hluhluwe

As we entered the game reserve, an open-aired Land Rover with special elevated seats and my guide were waiting. He was dressed appropriately for a safari in khaki shorts and shirt with sandals. I, in my long skirt, shirt, sweater and

raincoat, climbed (not so delicately as it was very high) into the back seat behind him and we were off. Need I impress upon you, the reader, that I am 'miss city slicker'.

I saw rhinos, magnificent giraffes, baboons – whole families of them – crocodiles and one lone elephant. The details of my safari could fill ten pages, which is not possible in this publication. Suffice it to say that going on a safari is seeing G-d's world perhaps at it's most beautiful and wondrous. How each animal survives, thrives and yes, dies in their natural habitat is incredible. The fact that I was able to witness this, in an unprotected, open vehicle, is nothing short of a minor miracle. The truth be told, I didn't breath for the first 10 minutes, waiting for a baboon or giraffe to lick me, or stick it's head next to me in the jeep. But once I realized that they didn't give a hoot about me, I relaxed and took in every moment of the next three hours. What a trip that was!

Devorah and Shlomo Wainer

Devorah Wainer was born in Johannesburg, referred to by the natives (and henceforth) as Joberg. Her parents were traditional, as is most of the Joberg community. At twenty she left to study in Israel for six months at a 'B'nai Akiva' kibbutz. One of the classes on the kibbutz was Kabbalah, given by a Chabad shliach in Israel. Devorah soon found herself wanting more of what he was teaching. The shliach suggested that she enroll in Machon Alte, in Tzfas. Devorah heeded his advice and within a week knew that she had found what she was searching for.

She spent two years in Machon Alte and, in 1992, met her husband-to-be, Shlomo (who was



My pics along the safari



Rabbi Wainer with Mr Sid Youngelson donning Tefillin at age 100 years

South Africa

(cont'd)

studying in Kfar Chabad). They married and six months later began their shlichus in Umhlanga.

Their first Chabad House was the last house on the beach next to a large hotel. Their home served as the shul and community center.



I bought two apples from this sweet women along the way.

Living in Umhlanga

Rabbi Shlomo is the Rabbi not only in Umhlanga, but all along the north and south coasts, in the myriad of towns that dot the coastline. When he first started out he explained his goal was, "To meet one Jew every day." Since 1994 he has kept a report of how many people he has met, how many mezuzahs he has put up, how many men have put on tefillin. Sometimes he goes alone on his trips, but very often two Yeshiva students assist him.

Of the many, many stories that Shlomo recounted over Shabbos, the following gives an insight into the determination and passion he puts into his work. The people responsible for me even hearing this story are Ze'ev and Ilana Zloty, dear, close friends of the Wainers. At Ze'ev's insistence, Rabbi Shlomo recounted the following:

There is a town on the coast called Newcastle, almost completely made up of Afrikaaners. (An Afrikaaner is a white, ultra-conservative South African). There are almost no blacks living in Newcastle – it is exclusively the domain of the Afrikaaner. One day Shlomo got wind that there was a student in the high school who was Jewish. So he and his two yeshiva students decided to take a trip to Newcastle and find this boy.

As Ze'ev described it, these people don't know what a Jew is and most likely never saw one in their lives. Driving into Newcastle is akin to waving a red flag in front of a bull. But nothing was going to deter Rabbi Shlomo. A Jewish neshoma (soul) is a whole world and he was determined to find this boy. He drove right into the center of town, towards a group of young men congregated on a corner. "Does anyone know who the Jewish boy is here?" They gave Shlomo his name and now he had to find him. Where better than the local high school.

So Rabbi Shlomo called the principal and said he wanted to meet with this young lad. The principal said that under no uncertain terms could they meet the boy during school hours. Shlomo was insistent so the principal finally agreed that Shlomo could meet him between classes for a total of... four minutes!

The next day Shlomo and the two bocherim (Yeshiva students) made their way to the high school. They found the principal's office and, as Rabbi Shlomo laughingly describes it, "When we walked in, the secretary stopped writing, looked up, absolutely incredulously speechless at the sight of three bearded, black hatted suited men. Her pen stayed in mid air for the entire time we were there." They told the secretary who they were seeing and she said she knew about it. All the while they were speaking to her, said Rabbi Shlomo, "Her eyes kept going down to her paper and slowly rising again to make sure she was not dreaming."

Finally, the boy arrived. Rabbi Shlomo introduced himself and asked if the boy if he knew he was a Jew. The boy responded that his mother was Jewish but his father wasn't, so if they tell him he's Jewish, "Ok, I'm Jewish." Keep in mind that they have four minutes to speak to him (and the secretary is still in a half-frozen position). They quickly rolled up his sleeve, put on tefillin, he repeated the Shema, they undid the tefilling and the bell rang. The end of the story is that Rabbi Shlomo returned the next year but this time went directly to the boy's house and this time he eagerly put on the tefillin. Who knows what impact this will have on him for his future life?

In South Africa, most people go to shul on Friday night. I only found this out when Devorah asked, after we lit our candles, if I wanted to see the shul in full action. I declined the offer because I saw no other chance to get to know her.

Devorah is a beautiful, quiet and very strong woman. In the past two years she and her husband have had to make a very difficult decision regarding the education of their children. Shlomo had eluded to it briefly, as when I arrived he told me his wife would be back from Joberg Thursday night.

The Wainers have four children: Chani, 9 1/2, Avremi 8, Mendel 6 and Meir 3 1/2. There is a

*So he and his two
yeshiva students decided
to take a trip to
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this boy.*

Jewish day school in Umhlanga, but both Devorah and Shlomo felt the school would not be beneficial to their children. So up until two years ago they home-schooled them, bringing in a young couple on shlichus to help. But they quickly realized that although academically the children were excelling, socially they were seriously lacking. After much research and many conversations with their mentors, it was decided to put the children into school in Joberg. That meant Devorah moving there to be with them. It also meant Shlomo would be alone much of the time in Umhlanga. Of all the challenges that couple face in their postings, education of their children and its repercussions are the most difficult. In the near future, Rabbi Shlomo is going to try and make a deal with one of the less expensive, but highly successful airlines (which also happens to be owned by a Jew) to get a reduced rate for the one hour flight from Durban to Joberg.

As we continued to chat on her couch, our conversation went back to shul on Friday night. She told me they get between thirty and forty people and the place is very lively. Devorah is very easy to talk to and after spending a Shabbos together I know that the women in her community must miss her terribly.

By the time Rabbi Shlomo and Avreimy came back from shul most of the guests had arrived for Friday night Shabbos dinner. It doesn't matter where in the world one goes for Shabbos, it just feels good that we are all, literally, on the same page.

Shabbos

Rabbi Shlomo is a one man show. The guests at his table, although most having been there before, did not know the Shabbos songs. No matter. In his engaging, fun manner and booming voice, Rabbi Shlomo made everyone feel like they had been singing these tunes their entire lives. By the last stanza, everyone was banging on the table, dancing in their place and just having a blast. The delicious challah, fish, salads, chicken, kugel and vegetables (all homemade) kept flowing out of the kitchen while Rabbi Shlomo entertained everyone with stories, songs (we all joined in) and something about the week's Torah portion.

After all the guests had left I sat and spoke with the Wainers till the wee hours of the morning.

Luckily, the gate kept me from spending the night at my lodge, so about 2:00 am I wandered upstairs and went to sleep.

As I walked to shul on Shabbos morning, Devorah kept telling me she was worried about her husband. Two yeshiva students were supposed to have come to Umhlanga this Shabbos to read the Torah, but they did not show up. If there was a minyan, said Devorah, Shlomo would have to read, and it was not his forte.

We arrived at their spanking new, very welcoming and tastefully decorated Chabad house about 10:00 am. It turned out that there was way more than a minyan. Before the Torah came out, Rabbi Shlomo stood in front of the entire congregation and said very honestly, "There are some things we do that we excel at and others that we do not. I will read from the Torah, but I will have Yakov beside me to help and correct any mistakes I make".

And then, one of the most moving experiences I ever witnessed, which caught me completely off guard, occurred. When the doors of the ark opened, there was one, beautiful Torah standing majestically in the center of the Aron Kodesh. I immediately thought of a song about a Jew who, during the war, carried his precious Torah until his strength totally ebbed away and he buried it. Here, in Umhlanga, one Torah watches over its people.

Rabbi Shlomo read very respectably, albeit a bit slower than I am used to hearing. At one point, after the fourth very long aliyah, he turned to everyone and said in his very South African accent and with a tinge of humor, "Those Yeshiva boys must be dealt with severely." He then continued to read until the end of the portion, finishing with the Haftarah.

The Kiddush

Following services there is a kiddush held outdoors. The following week, the new, indoor Kiddush hall should be completed. Everyone, about fifty people, was very excited.



'Opening' the barber shop in Soweto



'Clients' at the barber shop

And then, one of the most moving experiences I ever witnessed, which caught me completely off guard, occurred.

South Africa

(cont'd)



Doing laundry in Soweto



The 'garage'

Just before we sat down to the kiddush, one woman pulled me aside and passionately told me that the Wainers had taken a fragmented group of Jews and single-handedly made them into a community. The Wainers are deeply respected and loved by all the congregants.

After the kiddush we went back to the Wainers to set up the Shabbos lunch. By the time we arrived there were four people waiting for us. One couple, Molly and Nathan Nadler were among the guests. Nathan, who speaks no less than seven languages, told me he lived for a while in Montreal. He left, as thousands of other Jews, in 1976. He met Molly, a native South African, in Toronto, where she

was living at the time and together they decided to open a Bed and Breakfast in a place called Salt Rock about 40 kilometers from Umhlanga.

During the course of our conversation it turned out that Molly and Nathan were civilly married, but never had a Jewish ceremony, much to Molly's chagrin. The reason – Nathan did not have a copy of his 'get', his Jewish divorce. Suddenly, Nathan looked at me and said, "I know where the papers are. I filed them three years ago in a synagogue in Hampstead." I looked at Nathan and said, "I live in Hampstead." Molly looked at me and said "You'll get a copy of the get, and then we can get married the proper way." I was blown away for the second time that day. What are the odds that all of these pieces fell together – it could only be Divine Providence! Both Molly and I were crying. By the time they left I felt that I had known Molly my whole life.

Farewell to Umhlanga

Saturday night we had a 'braai' aka a BBQ in South Africa. Dear friends of the Wainers, Ze'ev

and Ilana Zloty, came over. They have a long history with Shlomo, too long to recount here. Suffice it to say that on a trip to America Shlomo took Ze'ev to 770 and then to the Ohel, the holy resting place of the Rebbe. The result was that nine months later almost to the day, the Zloty's son and daughter-in-law's adoption of a Jewish child came through. And then, a year later, the miracle that they had been told they would never see – the birth of their own child.

Sunday in Joberg

Through the kindness of Rabbi New, I was set up with Rabbi Levy and Shternie Wineberg in Joberg. Of course I had never met them, but I had no doubt that things, as they had in Umhlanga, would pan out. Turns out Shternie and I already knew each other from the 'kinus' - the annual convention of women Chabad emissaries held each year in New York.

The Winebergs live in a beautiful area of Joberg, attested to by my own, personal guest cottage behind their sprawling house. Their home is on one very large floor, as are most in Joberg. No basements anywhere. The Winebergs have seven children, three of whom still live at home.

Johannesburg is 508 square meters. It has an incredible 609 suburbs, 297 parks and 27 golf courses. 4.2 million people are registered as living in Joberg with another 3 million illegal immigrants from the many surrounding, very poor African countries.

While in Joberg I did two very different tours - one of the Jewish community and one of Soweto.

The Johannesburg Jewish Community

As I was only in Joberg for one and a half days, I literally blitzed through the very cohesive, well-structured Chabad community. Shternie, who teaches advanced scripture study to high school girls, took me on a tour of her son's school, The Torah Academy.

I arrived in time for line-up, which meant that all the elementary school children lined up by class in the stunning outside courtyard and recited, in unison, the psalms for that day. Then, the principal stood at the top of the staircase and told the

*Nathan, who speaks
no less than seven
languages, told me he
lived for a while
in Montreal.*

children of the various events of the day, who won awards for the previous days, etc. The children were all in uniform and unbelievably well behaved. Shternie gave me a tour of the inside of the school which is very nice but the grounds are breathtaking. There are three huge and well-appointed playgrounds and two massive sports fields. As the climate in South Africa is pretty temperate, sports is a popular activity.

At 8:45 Shternie bade me farewell for a few hours and I hopped into my waiting car to meet my tour guide for the next three hours – Samuel.

Soweto

Soweto, founded in 1927 means South West Township. It came into being as a result of a bubonic plague rapidly overtaking much of Joberg. To stem the illness, the government created this township and sent there Blacks who became contaminated.

Soweto consists of 27 townships, with a population of 3.2 million people. As I can attest, they are, for the most part, extremely poor and packed like sardines, home upon home. The township is divided into 3 categories: good, not so good and ugly. In the good part and whose home I saw, lives Desmond Tutu, Winnie Mandela (whose bullet-proof, heavily guarded home was paid for by Kadafi of Libya) and the first home of Nelson Mandella, who is revered by both blacks and whites.

As we were driving around I kept taking pictures of the most incredible sights. For example: barbers who set up 'shop' on any street. They bring a chair, a hair shaver, an apron and voilà – instant barber shop. Car washes and garages work the same way. They find a house with a water supply outside, attach a hose and, presto, instant car wash.

Finally we got to the ugly part of Soweto. Samuel, who was born in Soweto was correct – ugly does not describe how these people live. No running water, no electricity, no garbage collection. The 'homes' consist of whatever scrap materials they can find. How they are put together is a mystery.

All of a sudden Samuel pulled the car over to the side of the road, and asked me if I wanted a

walking tour of this area. Can we talk again? Self, I said to myself, into those conditions a Jewish woman does not venture. I politely told Samuel thanks but no thanks.

In Closing

What an experience, what sights I saw, what wonderful people I met. It never ceases to amaze me that no matter how far apart G-d scatters us, we are still one people, united by one Torah.

The Jewish community in South Africa is special on many levels. They have had to and still do endure much more dangerous conditions than we in North America. But their steadfastness, their persistence to not only keep Yiddishkeit alive, but to have it flourish no matter what the circumstances, is a strong lesson I took home with me.

G-d puts us where we must be at all times. To have been able to meet the Wainers, the Winebergs, the Nadlers and all the other people I was introduced to is a great merit. May Hashem bless all of us, wherever we live, with good health, nachas and prosperity and may we merit to see a world where there is no illness or strife – a world of peace and harmony. ■



Synagogue in the Torah Academy in Joberg



Grounds of the Torah Academy

Hey Kids!!

From giant trampolines to awesome rock climbing to laser-shooting to our very own sushi rolling, Kids in Action this year just 'ROCKS THE HOUSE!'

Eating yummy cotton candy and playing exciting games, riding in a stretch limo dressed in costume sure makes Kids in Action the place to be. But that's not all...

US KIDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!

With our mitzvah, we are making this world a better place!

Close to \$1500 was raised by Kids in Action for the sick children of 'Chai Lifeline'. We sent messages of love and hope to the needy on lunch bags, wrapped and decorated Chanukah gifts for sick kids at the Children's Hospital. We brought smiles to the elderly at our local senior residence home in honor of Purim.

BUT THAT'S NOT ALL...

THERE'S MORE TO COME!!

Thursday, May 11 – 'It's a Nosh Day'

We'll design our own candy treat to eat with a professional from 'Chocolate and Candy Creations'.

Mitzvah of the Day:

Record books onto a tape for hospitalized children

Thursday, June 8 – Surprise Activity!

Let's celebrate an accomplished year with awards, games, crafts, raffles and much, much more.

BE A PART OF

KIDS in
action



Email Rochel or Feigy – youth@themtc.com to RSVP for the next events

Baruch shenotan mikvodo lebasar vadam.”

It was the first time Thailand's Chief Rabbi Yosef Kantor had ever had occasion to recite the blessing, which thanks G-d for bestowing His regal grandeur on a flesh-and-blood royal who is in the presence of Jews.



Princess Ubolratana flanked by Rabbis Nechemia Wilhelm(L) and Yosef Kantor(R)

The royal was Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya; the occasion was the 'Tsunami Yizkor: Remember, React, Rebuild', organized in Bangkok by Chabad in late December on the first anniversary of the disaster. And although they didn't understand the words, millions of Thais were privy to the historic encounter between the princess and the city's handful of resident Lubavitch Hasidim, thanks to broadcasts of snippets of the event on all four national television channels.

In the Kingdom of Thailand, the analogy expressed in the age-old Jewish benediction has a contemporary relevance. The institution of the monarchy remains sacrosanct, and members of the royal family are accorded godly reverence. The divine status of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, also known as Rama IX of the Chakri dynasty, is founded on the belief that he is an incarnation of Rama, the Hindu god. His ubiquitous portraits adorn every home, public building and office across Thailand. During his upcountry visits, elderly women often lay their finest white napkins before his feet to walk on; his footprints become cherished relics.

Further underscoring the analogy expressed in the blessing, the 78 year-old king, the world's longest-reigning monarch, has been seen as a guiding light of morality and integrity for his people during his 60 years on the throne. His myriad royal projects incorporate everything from orphanages to educational scholarships to artificial rainmaking by cloud-seeding over arid regions. A short biopic played in cinemas before every showing and set to the royal anthem, to which moviegoers must rise, features an impoverished

rice farmer in his desiccated paddy of caked mudflats raising his hands, palms pressed together, to heaven in thanks for new rain.

As King Bhumibol's oldest daughter, Princess Ubolratana enjoys an exalted status of her own. Her presence lent an aura of majesty to the Chabad tsunami memorial, which was held in the Shangri-La Hotel. Thousands of people, including 18 Jews (seven of them Israelis) perished in southern Thailand on December 26, 2004.

Ubolratana's son, Bhumi Jensen, was one of the victims. The 18-year-old American-born prince, known popularly by his nickname Khun Poom, had just finished riding his jet ski at Khao Lak beach when the giant waves crashed ashore, drowning bathers and obliterating seaside communities for over a mile inland.

Now, the princess, seated on a golden chair inside an enclosure of bamboo slivers with an exquisite flower arrangement at her feet, face the cream of Thailand's 250-strong resident Jewish community and together they watched Chabad's favors on screen and on exhibit. A short documentary detailed its aid and reconstruction projects for tsunami victims; and photos captured a day-long funfest in Phuket that Chabad organized last May in order to distribute the two tons of toys that Jewish schoolchildren across the US and Israel had collected.

HRH Ubolratana was presented with an Israeli-crafted silver menorah – “a symbol of the great light and peace that we are fortunate to enjoy in this Royal Kingdom of Thailand,” Kantor told her. And a bit of Chanukah grandeur was bestowed on the royal in their presence. ■

by TIBOR KRAUSZ
Reprinted from
the Jerusalem Post



MTC Moments





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Celebrations

The Nature of Trust

by ROXANNA-RACHEL BUCHSBAUM



A few summers ago I took a weeklong road trip by motorcycle through the mountains of northern Thailand with a dear friend. The trees around us shuffled with wide ever-green foliage tall above tall, and glassy-eyed cattle met us along the semi-paved country-roads. Afternoon showers that drenched us to the bone, would disappear into the blue as quickly as they came leaving it to the benevolent sun to groom and dry us immaculately, within minutes after their passage.



My friend, soaking it up

My friend was not one to shy from adventure, and sensing the thrill of a treasure awaiting to be discovered, he was not about to stop.

During one of these magical afternoons, my friend decided to take a side road, and after a while parked the motorcycle by what seemed like an abandoned National Park. Reluctant to deviate from our well-charted plans for the day, yet curious enough to get off the bike, I meekly followed him deep into the forest, a humongous backpack hanging off my hips, while mumbling words of foreboding. My friend was not one to shy from adventure, and sensing the thrill of a treasure awaiting to be discovered, he was not about to stop. I am not sure which wind was carrying him, or whether the subtle muffled sounds of hidden waterfalls were calling his name through screens of green, but after a while we found ourselves gazing at an extraordinary sight.

We were standing on one side of a rapid waterfall, which was hurrying along grey huge banks of rocks toward a water spring enclosed within a lowered round basin. From there, the spring bestowed its water upon an ever-decreasing chain of consecutive waterfalls and basins. Diagonally located from where we stood, an additional stream of water spilled over from a smaller waterfall merging with the larger flow and joining it into a joyous celebration of splashing wavelets at the bottom. Later, we found out that the second waterfall's

waters were rather warm, being at the downward flow of a natural hot spring, creating a truly divine bathing-basin when mixed with the cold waters of the main waterfall. And as if this setting was not stunning enough, the tall trees rooted by the river's sides were draping with their foliage and almost obscuring the skies above the basin, as if veiling it with a carefully patterned lace of green and blue, which shuffled with a sigh at the whim of the breeze.

I nodded with disbelief at the beauty surrounding me, but also at my friend's relentless sense for adventure, as I could see him jumping and hopping, drawing closer and closer to the rushing water. I very much doubt whether he needed my encouraging, albeit sheepish, words: "You go ahead... I'll just stay here and watch it from afar..." but within minutes he reappeared with a stern and determined look in his eyes, "Come, we are going down the waterfall."

"Yes, sure we are", I answered sarcastically, reassuring him that not in a million years would I jeopardize my life, and calmly reminding him that we were far removed from civilization and that if anything would happen we would be entirely helpless. Knowing my friend and that look in his eyes, I knew that he would not easily defer to reason. Instead, waving his hands with excitement he was once again departing, this time swiftly making his way among the rocks and showing me how easy it would be to hop over the rushing current and lower ourselves to the basin where a formation of rocks would serve as a perfect resting place. Still holding on to my backpack as if it were the only thing of safety that could save me now, I realized that there was probably not much in this world that would not melt in the face of his determination and courage. My own would just somehow have to grow wings and make a match for the part, and quickly.

Do not ask me how I made my way between the rocks, or, for that matter, how grateful I was for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. I had the privilege to experience what would take hours of searching for words to describe. For a few magical hours, the inexplicable beauty and external peace matched a living, deep silence of gratitude inside.

Instead of searching in vain for the elusive words, I will rather tell you of the challenges that

were to follow. While in the safe belly of nature, the world in its entirety was all gone and forgotten. But once the sun began to set and the time came to leave, my heart sank, and not only for having to desert this heavenly lagoon. There were those rocks again, piled on top of one another, now menacingly casting their shadows and bearing their wet slippery skins. From a distance, the crest, enclosing the foaming water, looked like a hungry, and open mouth; its ruffled tunnels and currents impatient to collect their debt from their uninvited visitors. The closer we got, my mind begun imagining less and less favourable end-scenarios for our detour.

After the long climbing exercise, during which my friend, against the accepted conventions of physics seemed to be simultaneously in front of me leading, and behind me guarding my steps, we finally reached the top. But it was here so close to the solid ground and with it in sight, that touching it became unfathomable. Standing at the edge of the rock from which I was to jump above the cascade in order to get to the other side, a chill from within whispering a simple "No. No you are not getting out of here" paralyzed me to the bone, until fear and flesh merged into a limp image of myself. I lowered myself into a squat and felt how my ankles were binding me to the unforgiving rock like shackles. I could not remember how I traversed the water, jumping above it the first time around, but the distance was now widening and unimaginable to cross. Also, the water seemed more furious than before, awaiting the smallest mistaken step or misplaced foot to carry me down the rocky slope to a crushing end.

I absolutely froze and nothing that my friend could say or do, while reaching his arm from the other side, had any effect on me. My body shook and my teeth clenched and chattered like an out of control flamenco tune. I stayed crouching like that and waited for this to somehow end. But my friend would not give up so easily, not on the way down, and certainly not now, on our way up. He also knew deep inside that it was easier to role downhill but more difficult to climb against the wind, and he felt that he could help me if I only let him. So he continued to speak words of encouragement and promised to lift me up if I would only make the first step. I would have nothing to do but to reach out my hand and let my feet off the ground while he would pull me over.

It was not my reclaimed reason or regained courage that finally had me, with tears in my eyes, agree to reach out my hand. Rather, it was the trust I had in him, that he could lift me up, that I could let go for a moment, out there between these rocks, and he would help me across. He kept his promise and I made it to the other side, purple and blue like the sunset around us.

My friend, may his soul be of blessed memory, has since passed on, but the courage and faith that he taught me that day, have helped me across much wider gaps, not all of the H₂O variety.

When I started to truly consider the possibility of G-d's relevance to my personal existence, and of consciously welcoming His continuous presence into my life, the abyss between my secular habits of body and mind, and of that which we call the "religious" lifestyle were so wide and unimaginable that the sheer thought of it was enough to bring me to tears of fear and frustration. Things did not get any easier the more I found out about the depth and breadth of changes I would have to make, if I really stayed on this path. Seeing the road still ahead now is no less awe-inspiring than it was then. Yet, something has changed in the clutching of the jaw, since now I know that whether in Thailand or in Montreal it must be that G-d has been carrying me and calling me with words of encouragement all along.

Before I went to the New family for Shabbat dinner for the first time, as I was wiping my tears of trepidation, Hashem whispered "Come I'll carry you over, all you have to do is catch the 165 bus before 4:00 pm" and so I did. When I decided to go to an intensive summer learning program and worried to no end, there was the simple "Just get on that plane, the rest will be OK" again, and with some help I went and cannot now imagine it being any other way. Again and again, every step of the way, there is that silent but clear whisper "Just reach your arm and I will lift you up."

Sometime after that afternoon in Thailand, and after my friend's passing away, I began to realize



*It was not my reclaimed
reason or regained
courage that finally
had me, with tears in my
eyes, agree to reach out.*

Nature

(cont'd)

that the biggest moments of change, growth, as well as protection from danger, are not only a result of one's own choices (though these help), but the inevitable outcome of sheer trust in Hashem's will and His delight in lifting all of us up. Every experience that we have in our physical life is mirrored by one on high, which is of the same essence, though not of the same magnitude. The lessons we learn here we carry with us between the worlds like faithful messengers, whether knowing or unwittingly. It was not only my friend who was helping me along the river that evening. At the same time, Hashem is not single-handed in his efforts to redeem us, but rather sends faithful friends, family members, and teachers to help us do that which only appears to be impossible.

Over time we learn that nothing is impossible when we trust. ■



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Chabad's Global Warming

If messianism hadn't become such a malignant word with which cynics and rivals indiscriminately tar, feather and suspect every Chabad-Lubavitch chasid, it would be easier to say that the annual convention of the Lubavitcher rebbe's shluchim (emissaries) was nothing less than messianic.

No, not the messianism of a quadrant of Lubavitchers who still believe that the Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who died in 1994, is indeed the Messiah and somehow alive. In fact, every written word about the rebbe in the convention's papers and programs was suffixed with the Hebrew acronym indicating that the rebbe's emissaries, the elite of Chabad-Lubavitch, clearly recognize, as the coroner says in Munchkin Land, that he's not only merely dead but really most sincerely dead. One has to be blunt, for that is what the cynics demand, even if it brings a tear to a chasid's eye as much as if anyone had to swear under cross-examination that, yes, someone I loved is physically no longer.

Ethically and spiritually, though, the Rebbe is alive and his movement is hot. Almost 100 couples went out into the world as the rebbe's emissaries in the past year, bringing the total number to nearly 4,000. Chabad Houses opened for the first time in Poland and Laos, pushing the number of countries in which Chabad operates to over 70.

As Rabbi Berel Lazar, chief rabbi of Chabad's Russian operations put it, the shluchim are still guided by the rebbe's principal that "no Jew is too small, no effort too big, no result insignificant. He gave us the strength and the courage," said Rabbi Lazar, "the blessing to understand the infinite value of one lone Jew."

And when the actual Messiah does arrive to his fabled Banquet of the Leviathan, the joy at that apocalyptic feast might only hope to approach the energy, spirit, and foot-stomp dancing that had the silverware bouncing off the tables and the fine china rattling at the shluchim banquet at the New York Hilton.

The stories told at the conference were like a messianic checklist, from reviving the dead (albeit metaphorically) to ingathering exiles and other unearthly deeds.

Revival of the dead? Less than 15 years ago, the conventional wisdom among Jewish professionals was that Jewish life in the Soviet Union was a glorious relic of the past. Nevertheless, Chabad today has returned soul to dry bones, with permanent rabbis in 105 cities in the former Soviet Union, and circuit shluchim servicing 321 towns beyond that. Since last year's conference, Chabad shluchim welcomed 200,000 Jews to services, and energized American philanthropists into donating \$35.9 million – earning a spot on the Chronicle of Philanthropy's annual "Philanthropy 400" list, where the group ranked 391. And that's just Chabad of Russia.

Among the prominent New York philanthropists, George Rohr helped with the publishing of more than 200,000 Russian siddurs and religious books. And Michael Steinhardt helped finance a Chabad youth movement that now has members in more than 100 cities of the former Soviet Union. Steinhardt, who has spent scores of millions on projects for Jewish identity in the United States, said in conversation outside the ballroom, "Chabad is perhaps the most effective organization in the Jewish world. I think that. I really do. I'm trying to learn from Chabad."

According to the Yeshiva University student newspaper, "only seven or eight students [from the YU rabbinical school are] going into the pulpit rabbinate annually." By contrast, last year Chabad sent 25 pulpit rabbis to the Ukraine alone.

Stories were brought back from the ends of the earth. The Chabad shaliach to Malmo, Sweden, American-born Shneur Kessleman, proudly announced that after one year on the job, "My Kol Nidre speech was in Swedish."

There were 2,094 shluchim at the dinner, and they brought another 800 "civilians" – friends and supporters, many of whom were not chasidic, Orthodox or even Jewish, such as the ambassadors to the United Nations from Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Moldavia and Kazakhstan, each seated with their local Chabad shluchim.

by JONATHAN MARK
Associate editor
of The Jewish Week



L - R : Motti Farkas, Stewart Diamant, David Wajcman, Howard Lapkovsky, Stewart Kahan, Leslie Greenberg and Lorne Cassoff.

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Global Warming

(cont'd)

Chabad's success in parts of Europe and Russia has sometimes been met with resentment on the part of others working the same turf, albeit in smaller numbers. Chabad's religious soft-sell has been contrasted with its raw political muscle and machinations, helped by Russian President Vladimir Putin's patronage. The matter was addressed by a conference workshop, 'Interacting with the existing Jewish, rabbinic and secular organizations.'



Alan Dershowitz, another non-Chasid, was there to deliver the convention's layman's address. He began his speech with a "Wow! What a gathering! The energy! The love! The Yiddishkeit in the room is beyond belief."

He said that when New York Magazine found out he'd be speaking at the Chabad banquet, they called and asked, "Why? Why are you... speaking in front of Chabad? You don't agree with all of their policies." Their implication was, said Dershowitz, "If you don't agree with everything, you agree with nothing. I explained that what I learned more than anything from Chabad is how to emphasize points of agreement rather than points of disagreement. Chabad doesn't require agreement. They simply open themselves up to Jews."

Dershowitz admitted to skepticism when he first heard Chabad was sending a shaliach to Harvard University, where he's a law professor. Dershowitz said, "My idea was, [Chabad in] Siberia? That's nothing. Central Africa? That's a breeze. Chabad at Harvard? How can that ever happen? Kids come to Harvard to rebel against religion, to look for more liberal attitudes."

But, said Dershowitz, a few weeks ago, 400 Harvard students showed up for Chabad's Friday night dinner. Chabad's presence on campuses "is absolutely crucial... to make young people proud of being Jewish" and proud to support Israel. "We cannot rest until there is a Chabad shaliach on every major college campus in the world," he said.

Rabbi Lazar recalled that in a Kremlin conversation, Putin told him about how he grew up terribly poor, with neighbors who were chasidim. "They always made sure to invite him over. They served him supper. They helped him with his homework.

Friday night they gave him gefilte fish and knaidlach," said the rabbi.

"He remembered," said Rabbi Lazar, "watching this Yid learning the Talmud and keeping Shabbos. He realized, not only were they kind to a child who wasn't theirs, kind to a child who wasn't Jewish, but they were kind to a child in a time and place when it was dangerous for Jews to do all that."

Thirty years later, said Rabbi Lazar, first as Leningrad's deputy mayor and now as Russian president, Putin has been "more than encouraging to Jewish rebirth in Russia."

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, the author of numerous books on Jewish ethics, literacy and identity, was at the banquet as a friend of the shluchim from North Carolina. Halfway through the evening he passed a note from his table to mine: "Chabad models more powerfully than any group I know the Talmudic teaching that whoever saves one life it's as if he saved an entire world. They really and consistently treat each individual as sacred. And they do so joyfully and uncomplainingly, and to not complain is not such a common thing in Jewish life."

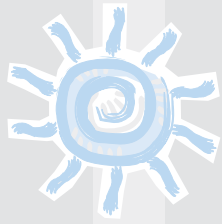
Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky read the roll call and the shluchim stood up, table by table, in response to his booming voice: "Asia – let's welcome the shluchim from China! The shluchim from India ... Japan ... Nepal ... Singapore ... Thailand ... Laos. We welcome the shaliach from the Congo," and the traveling shluchim who serve Nigeria, Niger, Gabon, Namibia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya and Angola.

The band punched out the Marseillaise for the delegation from France, and when the roll call was finished all 2,891 shluchim and friends started dancing, weaving around the ballroom, arm on shoulder, to the raucous melody known as the "Niggun of Rosh Chodesh Kislev."

When the banquet was over, some 500 shluchim returned to the big shul in Chabad headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway to fabreng – that unique chasidic get-together celebrating Torah, schnapps, stories, songs and camaraderie.

The fabrengen kept going until the sun lifted over Brooklyn. It was time for morning prayer, and then to catch a plane. ■

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another non-Chasid,
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layman's address.*



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Miriam's Tambourine

by CHANA WEISBERG

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Bitter was the daily fare of the Jewish slaves in their Egyptian exile. What began as forced labor steadily degenerated into acts of unspeakable brutality and horror, culminating with Pharaoh's decree to murder all newborn male infants and his bathing in Jewish children's blood.



While the physical labor was back-breaking, the moral toll was similarly exacting. The family unit was shattered, wives separated from husbands who were forced to remain at their work sites in far-away fields. The people were demoralized and depressed, stripped of any vestige of dignity or self-respect.

Under the daily terror of the taskmaster's whip, it seemed useless to hope for a better tomorrow.

The Jewish nation's heart had become too dulled, their minds too numbed and their bodies too worn to muster any faith.

One group of slaves, however, did not succumb, and carried in their hearts an inextinguishable spark of optimism. They retained their human dignity, they continued to believe in a better life. Encouraging their families daily with superhuman strength, they remained confident that their prayers would be answered.

This group of slaves was the Jewish women.

"In the merit of the righteous women of that generation, our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt."

After an exhausting day of excruciating labor, the women would polish their mirrors and use them to beautify themselves for their husbands.

At night, the women would sneak out to the men's camps bringing hot, nourishing food. They would heat water in the fields and bathe their husband's wounds.

The women spoke soft, soothing words. "Do not lose hope. We will not be slaves to these

degenerates all our lives. We have G-d's promise that He will have mercy on us and redeem us."

Many women conceived during these visits, subsequently giving birth to the children who would ensure the continuity of the Jewish people.

How did these Jewish women discover their reservoirs of hope amidst a hopeless situation?

The women had a leader and a teacher to emulate.

Her name was Miriam.

The Talmud comments: "There were three excellent leaders for Israel. They were Moses, Aaron and Miriam."

While Moses and Aharon were leaders for all the people, "Miriam was the teacher of the women."

She was a teacher who led by example.

From where did Miriam derive her courage and vision?

Miriam's name has two meanings, both exemplifying the qualities of her character.

The first, from the Hebrew root *mar*, is "bitterness."

Miriam was born at the time that the oppression of the exile had reached its nadir. "And they [the Egyptians] embittered [*vayemarreru*, from the root *mar*] their lives with hard work" (Exodus 1:14).

Born into the worst period of servitude, Miriam felt the bitterness and ache of her people. Her earliest years were formed by the heartbreaking reality of the Jewish exile.

Witnessing the murders and the torment, she wept with her brethren, praying incessant prayers, and hoping beyond hope for a better future.

Miriam was personally exposed to the decrees of the wicked Pharaoh; no one could understand the bitterness of the exile better than Miriam.

The other meaning of Miriam's name is "rebellion" (from the root *meri*).

At night, the women would sneak out to the men's camps bringing hot, nourishing food.

Despite being born into the most difficult period of oppression, Miriam rebelled from her earliest age against the slave mentality engulfing her people.

Though she felt their pain acutely, she would not succumb to fear or despair. Though she was exposed to abject cruelty, she would not yield to moral corruption or apathy. Bravely and resolutely, she kept vigilant watch over the faith in the promise of redemption.

We are introduced to Miriam just as the new Pharaoh ascends the Egyptian throne. "There arose a new king over Egypt... And he spoke to the Hebrew midwives, the name of one was Shifrah and the name of the other Puah.

"And he said, 'When you act as a midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthing stool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter she shall live.'"

Despite this decree, "The midwives feared G-d and did not act as the king of Egypt commanded them... And it came to pass because the midwives feared G-d that He made them Houses..."(Exodus 1:8-17).

Rashi explains that the names of the midwives mentioned were the professional names of Jocheved and Miriam.

Jocheved (Miriam's mother) was called Shifrah because she was expert in beautifying (from the root shafar) and cleansing the newborn. Miriam, though still a child, was expert in cooing (from the root pa'ah) to the newborn and calming a crying infant with her soothing voice.

According to the Midrash, Miriam was called Puah due to another episode. "She revealed her face brazenly (from the root hofiya) against Pharaoh pronouncing, 'Woe to this man, when G-d avenges him!'

"Pharaoh was infuriated with Miriam's comment and wanted to have her killed. But, Jocheved appeased him, 'Will you pay attention to her? She is but a child who doesn't realize to whom she is speaking, or what she is saying!'"

Miriam was only five years old at this time. Despite her tender years, Miriam valiantly stood up

to the mightiest ruler on earth, audaciously rebuking him for his cruelty to her people.

This was Miriam, the mother of rebellion.

Rebelling against the status quo, fighting against apathy and cruelty. Bravely, she and her mother disregarded Pharaoh's edict to murder the infant boys, even providing food and necessities for their survival.

G-d repaid these valiant women by granting the "Houses" – from them issued the dynasties of Priesthood, Levites and Kingship. Such positions of leadership could only be filled by the descendants of such women who would pass on their moral strength and convictions, enabling them to prevail over any acts of immorality or injustice.

Another incident in Miriam's childhood also reflects her strong character and ability to stand up against the status quo, and despite the bleakness of the moment, find an enduring faith in a more promising future.

The Talmud relates that when Pharaoh decreed that all newborn baby boys be cast into the Nile River, Amram, Miriam's father, decided to divorce his wife.

As the preeminent leader of the generation, Amram was setting an example for all others. If no children would be born, innocent babies would not be killed.

All the men of the generation followed Amram's example, divorcing their own wives.

Observing this, Miriam approached her father saying: "Father! Your decree is worse than Pharaoh's. Pharaoh only decreed against the males, but you are decreeing that our people should be bereft of both males and females!"

"Pharaoh is a wicked man and therefore it is unlikely that his decree will stand, but you are righteous and your decree will be carried out.

"Furthermore, Pharaoh is only doing evil in this world. The murdered infants are innocent and have



All the men of the generation followed

Amram's example, divorcing their

own wives.

Miriam

(cont'd)

a portion in the World to Come. But your decree will deprive them of the next world, for if a child is never born, how can he gain a portion in the future world?

"You must remarry Mother. She is destined to give birth to a son who will set Israel free!"

Miriam was six years old when she confronted her father. Her words made such a profound impact on him that he brought her before the Sanhedrin (Jewish Supreme Court) to repeat her petition.

The members of the Sanhedrin responded to Amram, "You forbade (us to remain married to our wives), you must now permit."

He said, "Should we return to our wives quietly?"

They answered, "And who will let all the Jewish people know (to likewise remarry their wives)?"

Amram placed his wife on a beautiful *chupa* (bridal platform). Aaron and Miriam danced and sang before her, as before a bride. Miriam sang repeatedly, "My mother is destined to give birth to a son who will set Israel free!"

Though Jocheved was 130 years old, her youth miraculously returned and she became beautiful as a fifteen year old. Even the ministering angels joined with them singing, "joyous mother of children."

After seeing this, the rest of the Jewish men also remarried their wives. An entire generation was transformed, all due to the courage and vision of the young Miriam, who had the confidence to speak her mind and declare her prophecy.

Shortly after, Jocheved gave birth to a son and saw that "he was good."

At the moment that Moses was born, the entire house was filled with the holy light of his Divine radiance. Amram kissed Miriam on her head and said to her, "My daughter, your prophecy has been fulfilled!"

The happiness of the moment was shattered, however, with the realization that this male child would be taken to be killed.

"And when Jocheved could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark made of reeds... and put the child in it and laid it in the rushes by the river's bank. And his sister (Miriam) stood far away, to see what would be done to him." (Exodus 2:3-4)

When they took Moses to the river, the disheartened Jocheved hit Miriam on the head and said, "My daughter where is your prophecy now?"

But Miriam remained stubbornly resolute.

She stood by the river to see not if, but how her prophecy would unfold.

She, too, felt the pain and bitterness of her baby brother being torn away from her family. But at the same time, she was filled with her spirit of rebellion – she would not succumb to hopelessness.

This was Miriam. She encompassed the dual qualities of feeling the intensity of pain while at the same time rebelling against its overpowering hold to discover a seed of faith and yearning, deep within.

In the thicket of the bushes, Miriam stood watch over her brother's fledgling life. It was she who witnessed Batyah, the daughter of Pharaoh, come to bathe in the Nile River. Discovering the basket at the edge of the river and hearing the woeful cries of the infant within, Batyah decided to rescue the child.

It was a self-assured Miriam who approached Batyah to suggest that she would bring the baby to a Hebrew wet-nurse. Unbeknownst to Batyah, Miriam brought Moses back to his own mother.

Moses remained in his home, absorbing the crucial spiritual nourishment of these tender years until he was weaned. Only after being equipped with his parents' love and teachings was Moses transferred back to the royal palace to begin his role as leader and redeemer.

Miriam was there, standing watch on the bank of the Nile, as her entire nation's future hung in balance over the precarious fate of an infant floating in a small basket in the mammoth river. But never did her faith in the redemption of her people falter. As the leader of the women, Miriam imbued

*Miriam was six
years old when
she confronted
her father.*

this quality in their aching hearts. And, it was this quality that empowered the righteous women to be the purveyors of the redemption.

We are now many decades later, on the shores of the Red Sea.

Moses has grown, and has returned from Midian as the divinely appointed redeemer of his people. G-d had performed the wondrous ten plagues to punish the Egyptians' cruelty and free His people from their oppression. The people have marched triumphantly out of Egypt. Then, as they were being chased by a recalcitrant king and his army, G-d miraculously split the sea, saving His people and drowning their enemies.

Finally, after hundreds of years in exile, their enemies had been utterly thwarted and the Jews experienced a complete, miraculous salvation. The Jewish people's ordeal in Egypt was over! Their servitude had come to a end and their redemption was palpable.

Standing at the shores of the Red Sea, the Jewish people, under the direction of their leader, Moses, begin to sing the *Shirat Hayam*, a song expressing their ecstatic gratitude and thanksgiving to G-d.

And as Moses and his nation concluded their song, something inexplicable happens.

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines, dancing. And Miriam answered them, 'Sing to the L-rd...'"(Exodus 15:20-21).

Moses and the men sang their song. And then Miriam and the women rose to sing their song.

The men sang with their voices. But the women's song was composed with voice, tambourines and dance. The women's hearts were full of a greater joy and their song was more comprehensive.

What was the woman's contribution to the singing? Why did Miriam and the women's singing surpass the men's song?

Rashi (Exodus 15:20) explains how the women had these tambourines with them. "The righteous

women of that generation were confident that the Holy One Blessed be He would make miracles for them, so they prepared tambourines and dances."

When the Jewish people left Egypt, they left hastily. So hastily, in fact, that they were not even able to finish baking their bread, and it baked flat on their backs as matzah. The women were not concerned about their physical sustenance; they were certain that G-d would provide. They lived in a higher dimension, beyond the natural reality. Yet despite their hurriedness, the women took the time to prepare, well in advance, something that they felt would be essential.

After hundreds of years in bitter exile – after witnessing acts of utter barbarism, after weeping rivers of tears for the babies torn from their arms, after seeing their children cemented alive into brick walls to fill missing quotas – what did these women prepare while still slaves in Egypt?

What was on the minds of these women who had seen affliction beyond the human breaking point? What was on the hearts of these women who bore too much anguish to fathom? What do their worn, tired, tortured and beaten bodies carry out of Egypt?

Tambourines.

Instruments with which to sing and praise their G-d for the miracles they knew would come to be.

Engulfed in misery, the women did not lose their vision. Mourning their murdered children with their feminine sensitivity more keenly than any of their male counterparts possibly could, the women found the strength to fortify themselves not to lose hope.

The women found *meri*, Miriam's spirit of rebellion. They would rebel against depression that would have been a natural outgrowth of such



What was the woman's contribution to the singing? Why did Miriam and the women's singing surpass the men's song?

circumstances. They would rebel against apathy. They would rebel against hopelessness.

Amidst their agony, the women prepared tambourines. They fanned the spark of yearning within their worn souls until it grew into an overpowering, inextinguishable flame of faith.

As bitter as their lives became, their faith grew stronger.

Certain beyond a shred of doubt that their G-d would remember them, their only concern was

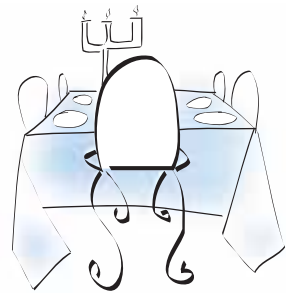
being adequately prepared to sing with the appropriate expressions of joy for the miracles that were sure to occur!

This was the strength of Miriam. A feminine strength born out from bitterness; a faith sewed amidst despair.

This was the strength of the women who left Egypt, equipped with tambourines and dances of joy and faith.

And this is the strength of all women. ■

Around our Table



Vinaigrette

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch beets
- 1 pound carrots
- 6-8 potatoes
- 1 onion
- 1 large cucumber
- 6 tablespoons oil
- juice of 1-2 lemons
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

DIRECTIONS

Peel and wash beets, carrots, and potatoes. Keep whole. Place beets on bottom of 6-8 quart pot. Place carrots on top of beets and cover generously with water. Cook for 1 hour. Add whole potatoes and cook for additional hour or until tender.

Dice cooked vegetables. Add diced onion and diced cucumber. Add juice of lemon and salt to taste. Toss thoroughly. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Serves 8-10.

Potato Puff (Dairy)

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups mashed potatoes
- 1 cup sour cream or plain yogurt
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1 tablespoon onion, minced
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 Tablespoons butter, melted or 2 tab oil

DIRECTIONS

Combine the potatoes, sour cream or yogurt, cottage cheese, onion, salt and pepper, and place into a greased 2-quart casserole.

Pour on melted butter.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until puffed and golden.

In our Rosh Hashana Mosiac, we printed a story entitled *Brothers*, about two brothers, Zalman, who lives in Montreal and Shea, who resides in Vilnius, separated during the Holocaust and reunited after 63 years. What follows are Roslyn's impressions of their recent trip to Vilnius.

During our recent trip to Vilnius, Lithuania to visit with our new found brother, Yehoshua (whom we call Shea), we had the privilege to meet with the Chabad emissaries, Rabbi Sholom Ber and Dina Krinsky and their wonderful children.

Friday night services were melodious and joyful. Following services we proceeded into the hall for Shabbat dinner where Rabbi Krinsky insisted that Zalman, Shea and I sit with his family. After the blessings over the wine and challah there was much singing, making the atmosphere warm and welcoming.

During the course of the meal we got to know a bit about the Krinsky's lives in Vilnius. Under the communist regime, they explained, there was virtually no religious practice, the result being, that although it has been fifteen years since its fall, people remained very distant from Judaism.

Twelve years ago, just before Purim, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Krinsky arrived to this remote part of the world. The year they arrived they placed a small ad in the local newspaper about Purim. Incredibly, two hundred people showed up. Slowly, this dedicated couple began reaching the Jews of Vilnius, educating them about the holidays; celebrating with them, teaching them. Today, the Krinsky's have nearly one hundred children enrolled in their school, they run two summer camps, one for boys and one for girls, and run Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

Through education and programming, Jewish children in Vilnius have a strong connection to their roots. When one of the children expressed his desire to have a 'real kosher Passover', which they could not have at home, the Krinsky's created a Passover Camp, now in its sixth year. Rabbi Krinsky also invited the Jewish community to partake in the seders and over one thousand men, women and children attended last year!

The Krinsky's have had many extraordinary stories over the years. While her husband was away one year, Rebbetzin Dina had to deal with an

incredible situation. There as a young girl whose parents had died when she was a year and a half and was raised by her grandmother. The grandmother died suddenly, rendering the girl a double orphan. After much difficulty, Dina was able to obtain temporary guardianship of this girl. The missionaries in Vilnius, who had been in contact with the grandmother and the girl over the years, tried to overturn the judgment and gain custody of the young girl. In the end, as the girl was a student in Chabad's school, the Krinsky's were able to obtain permanent custody. We met the girl, who is now happy, functioning well and for the first time in her life has a real family. This young girl, who never had a reason to smile, is now filled with joy!

I would be remiss in not mentioning some of the obstacles the Krinsky's must deal with in their 'shlichus'. Their oldest son, who is now eleven years old, has been attending Yeshiva in Moscow for the past two years. Aside from the fact that he does not live at home, he must fly alone back and forth from Moscow to Vilnius. When it comes time to give birth, Rebbetzin Dina must go to Kovno, sixty miles away, to a maternity clinic, as Vilnius has no birthing center. Kosher meat is not readily available, so Rabbi Sholom Ber frequently takes on the role of a shochet (ritual slaughterer).

Our visit to Vilnius was another step in cementing the relationship between my husband and his brother. The dimension of meeting the Krinsky's was a bonus we never expected. When speaking to their children, (they speak only Yiddish and Russian), we saw that they were well-adjusted, friendly and very involved in their parent's lives. Without Chabad, Vilnius would be void of Yiddiskeit and Yiddishe neshomas would be simply lost.

May they, and all the 'shluchim' – Chabad emissaries – all over the world, go from strength to strength. ■

by ROSLYN CONVOY



Roslyn and Zalman Convoiy, Shea Convoiy and Rabbi Krinsky



Taharat Hakodesh synagogue in Vilnius



L - R: Zalman, Rabbi Krinsky, Shea and the Krinsky children

A Katrina Kind of Love

*If not for the hurricane that ravaged her hometown,
Rachel Kaufmann might never have met the man of her dreams.*

by BARRI BRONSTON
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They didn't know each other, but as they soon would discover, Rachel Kaufmann and Mendy Traxler have more in common than even they could imagine.

That casual exchange, made while stocking up on kosher food at a grocery store, would lead to one of the most sacred and joyful days in Rachel and Mendy's lives: their wedding day.



Mendy and Rachel Traxler

Both are twenty-two. Both come from families with four girls and three boys. Their mothers attended the University of Buffalo at the same time, having grown up an hour away from each other in upstate New York.

When Hurricane Katrina struck on Aug. 29, both were finishing stints at separate summer camps in New York's Catskill Mountains – he as a camp manager, she as a counselor whose campers included his sister.

Instead of flying home to New Orleans, Kaufmann waited a few days and headed straight to Houston, where her family – like thousands of other New Orleans area Jews – had sought refuge from the flood.

Traxler, a rabbinical student whose father is a Chabad rabbi in Houston, traveled to Baton Rouge to help with relief efforts.

"I did everything from visiting the sick to bringing food to firefighters and FEMA workers," said Traxler, an emergency medical technician who also helped out at the Red Cross shelter. "I helped with Rosh Hoshana services. I was there for a month before I went back to Houston."

It was in Houston that Traxler's mother, Shoshana, mentioned to Bluma Rivkin, a Jewish evacuee whose husband, Rabbi Zelig Rivkin, is a director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Louisiana, that she was searching for a partner for Mendy.

"They were shopping at Whole Food," said Nechama Kaufmann, Rachel's mother. "She says to Bluma, 'I'm looking for a wonderful girl for my wonderful son.' Bluma says she knows a wonderful girl from New Orleans, Rachel Kaufmann."

But before this match made possible by Katrina could be finalized, Kaufmann and Traxler would face a more rigorous matchmaking process designed to erase any doubt as to whether each was compatible with the other.

In Hebrew, the matchmaking process is called shidduch, and it is a very carefully prepared arrangement designed to bring a man and a woman together for the sole purpose of finding a marital partner.

"Before a couple goes out, the parents will contact friends, teachers, principals, camp directors to find out about their character, what kind of people they are," Nechama said. "There is a whole list of criteria. We take it very seriously. And if we feel our children are compatible, we tell our children about the person to see if they want to go out."

There is no flirting, no physical contact, no partying. Contrary to popular myth, it is not a forced marriage.

"We see what we like about each other," Rachel said. "If we don't like each other, we don't have to continue going out."

David and Nechama Kaufmann admired Mendy's work ethic, sense of humor and respect he showed toward his parents. Nechama called him a mensch – a Yiddish term for a kind, decent and honorable person.

Moishe and Shoshana Traxler liked Rachel's warmth, intelligence, devotion to Jewish studies, family background and willingness to give of herself to help those in need.

Both Mendy and Rachel tested negative for Tay Sachs and other predominantly Jewish genetic diseases, another step in the matchmaking process.

Pleased with the results of their research, the Traxlers and Kaufmanns went back to their children and suggested a meeting. Both agreed to give it a try.

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On the day they met, Mendy spent several hours delivering sukkahs – outdoor huts used in the harvest celebration of Sukkot – to hurricane victims. By the time he was done, he had less than an hour to get ready.

"I literally had a half-hour before we went out," Mendy said. "I jumped in the shower, got dressed and picked her up."

As is customary under Hasidic tradition, the two met in a public place – in the parking lot of a strip shopping center in one of Houston's most populous Hasidic neighborhoods. From there, they went to the lounge of the InterContinental hotel, where they spent the evening talking.

"I introduced myself as 'nervous, and you are?' Mendy said, laughing. "It was the first time I sat down in three days after doing all that heavy labor. I figured she must have been looking at me wondering, 'Why is this guy coming here so tired?' We talked for a couple of hours – about our backgrounds, our families, things we were interested in. I was very interested in what she had to say, so we went out again."

"The first date was short," Rachel said. "We talked about our goals, our likes and dislikes. I thought, 'OK. He's nice. I'll go out with him again.'"

And she did – again and again and again, growing fonder with each date.

"Everything clicked," Mendy said. "We share the same goals as to how we want our kids to be brought up. We share the same opinion on many topics. We felt like we were very compatible."

Within three weeks of their first date, Mendy asked Rachel to marry him. It was a simple proposal in a hotel lobby – no ring hidden in a fortune cookie or banner flying through the air.

"I didn't want to get caught up in all the fluff," Mendy said.

Without hesitation, Rachel accepted. "I liked everything about him," she said. "He's a real person and very smart. We're a good balance."

As is customary in Hasidic tradition, they flew to New York, where they formalized their engagement with a visit to the grave of Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the one-time leader of the Lubavitch movement. It was there that they asked for his blessing as they began their new lives as one.

In planning the wedding, the Traxlers and Kaufmanns considered several locales but settled on New Orleans after all involved agreed that the city's Jewish community needed something to celebrate.

"We needed a happy occasion and a reason to be together again," said Rachel's grandmother, Phyllis Kaufmann, who lost her home in eastern New Orleans.

They set Feb. 7 as the wedding date and Touro Synagogue on St. Charles Avenue as the venue. In announcing the news in an e-mail titled "Katrina the Matchmaker," Rachel's father, David Kaufmann, wrote:

"Divine Providence was definitely navigating their way. Little did they know that their stay in Houston would provide one of the most wonderful changes in their lives. This union between the two families is symbolic of the connection that has been forged between New Orleans and Houston and our respective communities."

In the Hasidic tradition, a wedding is considered as sacred and solemn as Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Couples neither see nor speak to each other for a week before the ceremony, and they spend most of their wedding day fasting and in prayer and spiritual reflection.

"It's an expression of the holiness of the occasion," David Kaufmann said.

Guests began pouring into Touro Synagogue an hour before the ceremony. Among them were contingents of Hasidic Jews from Houston and Crown Heights, a largely Hasidic community in Brooklyn, N.Y. Many brought cameras with them so they could snap pictures of Rachel – considered



Rabbi Moishe and Shoshana Traxler

In planning the wedding, the Traxlers and Kaufmanns considered several locales but settled on New Orleans.

Katrina

(cont'd)

royalty on this day – as she sat and prayed in a throne-like chair.



In a separate room, Mendy, flanked by his father and future father-in-law, recited traditional Hasidic discourse on the significance of marriage. Nechama Kaufmann and Shoshana Traxler performed the symbolic breaking of a plate, signifying that just as a broken plate is irreversible, so too should Mendy and Rachel's union.

"Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!" the nearly two dozen men who were gathered in the room shouted at the sound of the shattering plate.

With the marriage ceremony just a few minutes away, Mendy prepared to see his bride-to-be for the first time in a week. With friends and family members singing a sacred 18th century melody called "The Alter Rebbe's Nigun," Mendy slowly approached his bride-to-be, and in a ritual called the *bedeken*, placed the veil over Rachel's face.

A few moments later, Mendy was standing under the *chuppah* – symbolic of the couple's home – awaiting Rachel's arrival. With nearly 300 guests packing the Touro Synagogue courtyard, many had to stand to get a glimpse of Rachel as she walked toward her groom. Clad in a modest yet elegant raw silk gown and carrying a bouquet of white roses, she circled Mendy seven times, another ritual symbolic of the seven days of creation and the continuing circle of life.

The tradition-steeped ceremony concluded just as all Jewish weddings conclude: with the groom stomping on a glass followed by the guests' jubilant cries of "Mazel Tov!"

As their friends and relatives moved into the social hall, Mendy and Rachel were escorted to a private room for *yichud*, a chance for the newly married couple to break their fast and have time to themselves before joining their guests for the wedding feast.

But when they entered the hall, which was divided into sections for men and women, eating

wasn't nearly as much on their minds as dancing. On the women's side, Rachel ran through a human archway, stopped momentarily to greet her guests and then headed straight for the dance floor to partake in traditional circle dancing.

On the men's side, the festivities also included circle dancing, only rowdier and faster. As the wine flowed, so did the merriment, with one guest attempting to dance on his hands and others balancing cups of water – and in one case a bottle of whiskey – atop their heads. Mendy danced on a table as his friends lifted it in the air.

As the meal was being served, the fathers of the bride and groom took time to welcome their guests and remark on the significance of the day.



"The level of destruction (from Katrina) was such that no one could live here," Rabbi Traxler said. "There was such a degree of destruction and demoralization here that people of New Orleans didn't know if there would be a tomorrow here."

"But out of misery comes amazing light," he said, referring to the joyful times that often come out of tragedy. "And tonight is the culmination of an amazing thing." ■

Many brought cameras with them so they could snap pictures of Rachel – considered royalty on this day – as she sat and prayed in a throne-like chair.

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