

chai TIMES

CHABAD HOUSE ■ JEWISH STUDENT CENTER ■ BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Serving the Community through Education and Inspiration

Adar 5767

February 2007

Vol. 21, No. 3

in the NEWS

Chabad to Lead Fleet of Birthright Buses to Israel

Bolstered by the recent gift of \$25 million by Shelly and Miriam Adelson, birthright Israel is gearing up to bring a record number of youth from North America and around the world to Israel on a free, all expenses paid, ten day trip to Israel this summer. In response, Chabad of Binghamton is planning to bring a few buses – its biggest group ever – of BU students and their friends to Israel through Mayanot birthright.

“Taglit-birthright is an incredible program we have been deeply involved in from the inception. Even during the most tumultuous times in Israel when many groups and organizations bowed out, we brought bus loads of students to Israel for this unparalleled experience. There is nothing like this for connecting Jewish students to their homeland and heritage,” explained Rabbi Aaron Slonim. “This summer is going to be especially huge.”

Students aged 18-26 who have never been to Israel on an organized peer trip are urged to take advantage of this offer and register on line at www.mayanotisrael.com.

Students who have been to Israel on an organized peer trip have the option of helping to recruit their friends for the trip and can earn valuable prizes for recruiting as few as five friends. Students who recruit fifteen friends can earn a free trip back to Israel. For details on recruitment visit www.mayanotisrael.com/recruit

“Any student or parent who has concerns or questions about the trip can call me at (607) 797-0015 and I will be happy to speak to them in person,” urged Rabbi Aaron Slonim.

Magical Community Purim Feast to Feature Chinese Menu, Unstoppable Spirit!

The entire community is invited to “kick up their heels” and join in celebrating Purim at the annual Purim Feast sponsored by Chabad House to be held on Purim day, Sunday, March 4 beginning 5:30pm; a “last chance” Megillah reading for those who could not hear the Megillah read earlier will be held promptly at 4:30pm. The event will be held at the Jewish Community Center at 500 Clubhouse Road.

“This is always a wonderful way for the extended Binghamton “*mishpacha*” to enjoy one of our most joyous holidays,” said Rabbi Aaron Slonim. “Over the years, our *Seudah* has become a



hallmark of *Simcha*, Jewish pride, and unity as men, women and children of all ages come together to celebrate.”

The program includes a full course Kosher Chinese Dinner (vegetarian options and a Kiddie menu are available),

L'chayim, desserts, music, spirited dancing and a show by comedic magician Chris Capehart. Cost for the program is \$15.00 per person, \$12.50 for seniors, \$10 students and \$6 for children under 12.

Chris Capehart has done it all. In thirty-five years he has performed on the big stage, lectured to magicians, become a famous, accomplished street performer, created routines and mastered the linking rings. He has been published and imitated throughout the world. His skill at close-up is no less than astonishing. His quick comeback and verbal skills, sharpened on the streets

See *Purim Feast* on Page 7

Purim Carnival Extreme Extravaganza at BU

The annual campus wide Purim Carnival will be held Thursday, March 1 beginning 8pm in the East Gym. Binghamton Community members of all ages are welcome to join in the fun. A \$3 admission package includes all of the rides and attractions and all the Hamentashen you can eat.

The Carnival, which attracts an average of 2,000 students annually, will feature a wide array of game booths and fantastic attractions including Extreme Bungee Sport Challenge, Rocky Mountain, Aquatic Party Challenge, Football Challenge and the ever popular Pedestal Joust, plus music and great Kosher munchies for sale. High points of the evening will include a Purim masquerade costume contest, hot-dog and cream-pie eating competitions and the popular Battle of the Bands.

The Carnival is a project of the Chabad House Jewish Center and is co-

sponsored by Alpha Sigma Phi, Alpha Epsilon Phi, Hillel-JSU, Jewish Heritage Programs, OCC, Campus Life, Sodexo



Marriot and most of the residential communities, with cooperation by the Greek groups and professional fraternities.

“The carnival is a huge program on every level and we begin to plan and work on this months in advance,” said carnival directors Harris Ringelheim, Rachel Spiegel and Jeremy Zenilman. “Having the whole campus co-sponsor an event in

honor of a Jewish holiday is unique to our campus, really fantastic! We are looking forward to the biggest and best carnival yet.”

“For me this is the third year directing this event and as a senior, I take great pleasure in seeing the fruit of our labors and how the carnival has evolved. It’s phenomenal!” enthused Harris Ringelheim.

“This is a great way for people to celebrate, have lots of fun with their friends and benefit charities too, so make sure to buy plenty of raffle tickets,” stated Melissa Mayers, raffle drive chairperson.

Proceeds from the carnival will benefit various charities including the local Jewish Family Services and the Children of Chernobyl campaign, a humanitarian health effort run by Chabad in Israel and the former Soviet Union. COC airlifts children from the heavily contaminated Chernobyl area and brings them to safety and medical treatment in Israel.

Shabbat 1000 Concept Reaches Bar Mitzvah Year Binghamton Makes History With Debut of Shabbat 1500

Binghamton University will make history once more with Shabbat 1500, a Shabbat dinner for 1500 student to be held Friday, March 23 in the East Gym on campus. Thirteen years ago, Chabad of Binghamton introduced Shabbat 1000, an ambitious ground breaking program, which has become a

much anticipated event on BU’s campus and has been duplicated on campuses across America.

The program, which includes a free, delicious Shabbat dinner, singing and plenty of spirit, is a joint effort of all the Jewish groups on campus: the Chabad House Jewish Student Center, Hillel- JSU and the Jewish Heritage Program. Annually, the program receives a special grant from the Elaine Heumann Memorial Foundation.

But it takes much more than those organizations and the students already active in leadership capacities to ensure the success of this project. “We are empower-

ing each and every student who cares about Jewish life on campus to reach out or in to their social circles and bring their friends, many of whom might not come without a personal invitation. Explained Harris Ringelheim, Chabad student president.

“I look forward to this special event every year, as a time where Jewish students come together in large numbers and bring with them the true idea of a kehilah, a community. I am confident that this year we will be able to meet the goal of 1500 and with it will come an even more

See *Shabbat 1500* on Page 6

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from the DIRECTORS

The Few. The Proud. The Brave.

Dear Friends,

As we approach Purim and brush up on the Megillah we once again encounter its main characters: king Ahasuerus, queen Vashti (briefly), Queen Esther, Haman *harasha* (the evil one) and Mordechai *hayehudi* (the Jew).

The description of Mordechai is a curious as well as novel one. It is peculiar because Mordechai was not the only Jew alive then and it is novel in that it is the very first time that a Jew is called *yehudi*. Later in the Megilla all of the Jews are referred to as *Yehudim* and that has in fact become, over time, the commonplace way of referring to Jews in the Hebrew parlance.

What does *Yehudi* mean? The commentaries see this name as being derived from the Biblical name Yehuda (Judah, one of the twelve tribes). That name was coined by Judah's mother Leah, when she exclaimed upon his birth "I will praise (*odeh*) G-d". The name *Yehudi* is etymologically linked with the notion of praising and thanking G-d. The appellation *Yehudi* is a declaration of a Jew's constant recognition and appreciation of G-d. Further, the very name *Yehudi* includes the essential letters of G-d's name. The Megillah is thus teaching us something about the nature of Mordechai: no closet Jew he; Mordechai wore his identity "on his sleeve." Despite the fact that he mingled with the dignitaries in the king's court and interfaced with the "Who's who" of society, he proudly and staunchly maintained his Jewish identity. He was chosen to introduce the name of *Yehudi* because he so aptly represented the notion it conveys.

The Megillah relates (Chapter 3):

"... King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedasa the Agagite, and advanced him; he set his seat above all the officers who were with him. All the kings servants at the King's gate would bow down and prostrate themselves before Haman for this is what the King had commanded concerning him. But Mordechai would not bow down or prostrate himself."

Haman's desire was to have Mordechai the Jew subserviate himself to an alien force; to sever – even momentarily – his unequivocal and exclusive allegiance to G-d. The Midrash comments that the expression *Yehudi* stands for one who recognizes G-d and negates completely any form of idol worship. Mordechai knew the wrath of Haman and how his refusal to bow might well ignite it, but he refused – even for one moment – to bend before any force other than G-d.

The rest is – as they say – history. Haman flew into rage and took revenge for Mordechai's "impudence" by presenting a plan for the wholesale destruction of the Jews to Ahasuerus. And he succeeded – almost. Events saw a complete reversal when after the entire nation of Jews fasted and repented, Esther's overtures to the King miraculously met with success and Haman's hateful plot was overturned. Additionally Mordechai, while maintaining his position as the head of the *Sanhedrin*, the Jewish court, became the Prime Minister. The king presented him with the signet ring, thus making him the second most powerful person in the kingdom. And still we see him being addressed as Mordechai *Hayehudi*.

There is an important lesson here for us moderns. Often, we may think that to attain status and acceptance in the world around us we must shed or somehow obfuscate our "Jewish skin". Being different is an impediment, we worry, towards true accomplishment and recognition. The story of Mordechai *hayehudi* teaches us differently. Moredechai's posture is an important lesson to his modern heirs: be proud and secure in your identity; never to bow or be swayed by those who would have you bend in a contrary direction. Indeed, Mordechai *Hayehudi* was, after initial difficulty, elevated and promoted to the highest of all positions in Ahasuerus's court!

Things today are not all that different. To be Jewish still means to be distinct. We must understand the concept of "a nation apart" as integral to our mandate and source of holiness. We are a nation chosen for a distinct purpose: to bring to the world the message of *yehudim* – G-dliness. This means we must first ourselves recognize G-d, praise G-d and bow only in that direction. When we keep our dignity, pride and distinct identity we, just as Mordechai in his day, are respected for that difference and recognized as a unique and unparalleled source of wisdom and radiance, the "light onto the nations" we were meant to be.

We too can bring a reversal to the events of our time and together bring about the vision of our prophets – humanity's eternal dream – a world perfected and redeemed.

With best wishes for a joyous Purim,

Aaron and Rivky Slonim

Rabbi Aaron and Mrs. Rivkah Slonim

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Published by Chabad House of Binghamton
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Materials reprinted from www.Chabad.org

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The Chai Times is published monthly during the Fall and Spring Semesters at B.U.

TORAH thoughts

Adapted from the Works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Esther's Story The Two Versions of Purim *by Yanki Tauber*

The decree of Esther was fulfilled regarding the words of this Purim, and they were written in a book

Esther 9:32

Each year, on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, we observe the festival of Purim, fulfilling the observances of the day as they have been practiced for more than 2300 years: we read the Megillah, the "Scroll of Esther"; we send gifts of food to our friends; we increase in charity to the poor; and we partake of a festive meal, replete with food, drink and unbridled joy.

Originally, there were two different conceptions of how the miracle of Purim should be commemorated. The observances of mishloach manot (sending of food- portions), mattanot la'evyonim (gifts to the poor), and mishteh v'simchah (feasting and rejoicing) were jointly proposed by Mordechai and Esther. However, the concept of the Megillah came solely from Esther: it was she, not Mordechai, who advocated that the story of Purim should be written in a scroll and included among the twenty-four books of the "written Torah" (the "Bible"), and that this written account should be publicly read each Purim.

Another difference between the two leaders was that it was Mordechai, rather than Esther, who wished to make Purim a full-fledged Yom Tov – a day of sabbatical rest like the first and last days of Passover and Sukkot.

The different Purims envisioned by Mordechai and Esther reflect their respective roles in the events of the time. It was Mordechai who personified the faith of his people with his refusal to bow to Haman; it was he who identified the source of Israel's vulnerability to Haman's decree, who called upon the Jewish people to repent and return to G-d, who led them in three days of fasting and prayer, who gathered thousands of Jewish children and studied Torah with them in order to arouse the mercy of Heaven. Esther, on the other hand, was the one who risked her life by approaching King Achashveirosh on the matter, who provoked the king's wrath against Haman, and who prevailed upon him to empower the Jewish people to defend themselves against their enemies.

Mordechai was the soul of Purim; Esther was Purim's body. In other words, Mordechai was the soul of Purim – the one who rectified the spiritual state of his people and summoned forth the divine salvation. Esther was Purim's body, the one who manipulated the physical events through which the salvation came about.

So Mordechai envisioned Purim as a Yom Tov, a day on which the Jew eschews all creative involvement with the material world, while Esther saw

it as a day that is very much part of the physical reality. And it was Esther who insisted that the story of Purim be written down, and read aloud each Purim, while Mordechai felt that it was enough that – in the words of the Megillah – it be "remembered and observed" when the events of the day are commemorated by a series of observances, as is the case with the other festivals. For Mordechai, it was enough that future generations be reminded of the miracle when they observe the rituals of Purim, whereas Esther felt that the events should be perpetuated not only as thoughts in the consciousness of Israel but also in the physical form of written and verbalized words.

Common wisdom has it that spirit is superior to matter. The physical is finite and temporal, while the spiritual is not bounded by time and space; the physical is inert, the spiritual vibrant and transcending. Yet the physical body relates to the divine truth in a way that is beyond the scope of the loftiest spiritual reality.

The Resolution

Purim is Esther's story, Esther's miracle, Esther's festival. When the observances of Purim were institutionalized by the Sanhedrin on the first anniversary of the miracle, it was Esther's vision that prevailed: the Purim we observe today is Esther's physical Purim rather than Mordechai's spiritual model. Indeed, the section of the Torah devoted to the story of Purim is called "The Book of Esther" – not "The Book of Mordechai" or "The Book of Mordechai and Esther," or even "The Book of Esther and Mordechai." Purim has been decisively established as Esther's story, Esther's miracle, Esther's festival.

For Purim is the festival of the Jewish body. Mordechai, too, recognized this when, together with Esther, he instituted a series of decidedly physical observances for Purim: gifts of food and money, and the joy achieved through feasting and drinking.

On the most basic level, this is due to the fact that "the decree was to destroy and kill the bodies

of the Jewish people... not their souls (as, for example, was the endeavor of the Greeks at the time of Chanukah) ... hence, the salvation is commemorated by physical means...."

Also, the physicality of Purim reflects the "natural" form of the miracle it commemorates. No seas split on Purim, no oil yielded eight times its potential light, no divine voice issued from a flaming mountain. To the perfunctory observer, the events of Purim do not appear miraculous at all, but a series of fortunate coincidences. Indeed, the name of G-d is not once mentioned in the Book of Esther (!) – an absence fully consistent with its "story line" of a palace intrigue involving an evil minister, a beautiful queen and a fickle king. While other festivals celebrate G-d's supra-natural interventions in history for the sake of His people, Purim extols the hand of G-d concealed within the natural world, the divine providence implicit within even the most mundane workings of the physical reality.

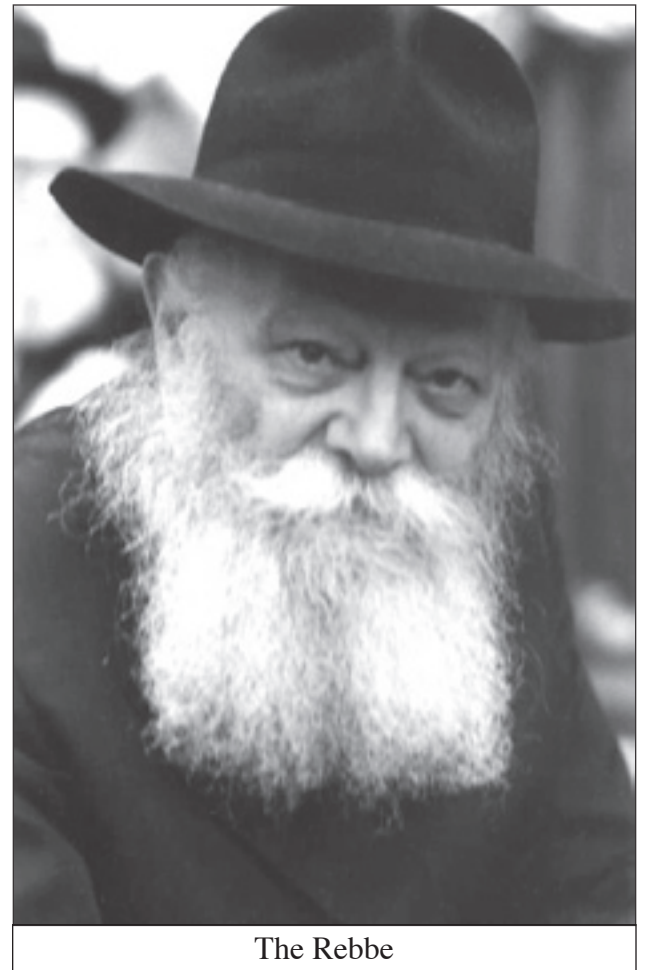
A Matter of Being

On a deeper level, the physical nature of Purim is at the heart of its unique contribution to the relationship between G-d and Israel.

Common wisdom has it that



spirit is superior to matter. The physical is finite and temporal, while the spiritual is not bounded by time and space; the physical is inert, the spiritual vibrant and transcending. Yet the physical body relates to the



The Rebbe

divine truth in a way that is beyond the scope of the loftiest spiritual reality.

The soul of man was forged in the "image of G-d." Its qualities and virtues – its intelligence, its compassion, its sense of beauty and harmony – are divine qualities, divine attributes reflected in the human spirit. But these are merely divine qualities, rather than true expressions of G-d's essence. To say that G-d is wise, compassionate or harmonious is to refer to a superficial aspect of His being, one that is wholly extraneous to the divine essence.

There is, however, one element of G-d's creation that reflects His quintessential being: the physical reality. The physical object is – unequivocally and definitively. "I am," it proclaims, "and my being is wholly defined by my own existence." Ostensibly, this makes the physical the greatest concealment of the divine truth, the most blatant denial of the axiom – proclaimed by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:35 – "There is none else besides Him." But it is precisely for this reason that, in all of creation, the physical object is also the most fundamental expression of the divine being. For in the physical object we have a model for absolute existence. Indeed, it is only as an analogue of its Creator's being that the physical object can possess this quality, which, in essence, is the exclusive prerogative of the Divine.

Our calendar is replete with spiritual avenues of relationship with G-d: the experience of freedom on Passover, the reliving of the revelation at Sinai on Shavuot, the imperial awe of Rosh HaShanah, the teshuvah of Yom Kippur, the sublime joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah, the subtle light of Chanukah. But once a year we access a dimension of our relationship with G-d that no spiritual experience can capture. On Purim, it is our physicality that affirms our commitment to G-d, expressing the truth that the definitive being of our bodies is but a reflection of the absolute being of G-d.

*Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

Holiday Observances

We start with the mitzvahs we observe on Purim eve and Purim day, but please read on for additional observances that begin even before Purim!

1) Listen To The Megillah

To relive the miraculous events of Purim, **listen to the reading of the Megillah (the Scroll of Esther)** twice: once on Purim eve, Saturday, March 3, 2007 and again on Purim day, Sunday, March 4, 2007.



It is crucial to hear every single word of the Megillah!

At certain points in the reading where Haman's name is mentioned, it is customary to swirl *graggers* (Purim noisemakers) and stamp one's feet to "drown out" his evil name. Tell the children Purim is the only time when it's a mitzvah to make noise!

2) Give to the Needy (*Matanot La'evyonim*)

Concern for the needy is a year-round responsibility; but on Purim it is a special mitzvah to remember the poor.

Give charity to at least two, (but preferably more) needy individuals on Purim day, March 4, 2007.

The mitzvah is best fulfilled by giving directly to the needy. If, however, you cannot find poor people, place at least several coins into a charity box. As in the other mitzvahs of Purim, even small children should fulfill this mitzvah.

3) Send Food Portions to Friends (*Mishloach Manot*)

On Purim we emphasize the importance of Jewish unity and friendship by sending gifts of food to friends.

On March 4, 2007, send a gift of at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods (e.g., pastry, fruit, beverage), to at least one friend on Purim day. Men should send to men and women to women. It is preferable that the gifts are delivered via a third party. Children, in

Purim 2007

Adar 14 - March 3-4



addition to sending their own gifts of food to their friends, make enthusiastic messengers.

4) Eat, Drink and be Merry



Purim should be celebrated with a **special festive meal on Purim Day**, at which family and friends gather together to rejoice in the Purim spirit. It is a mitzvah to drink wine or other inebriating drinks at this meal.

5-6) Special Prayers (*Al Hanissim, Torah reading*)

On Purim we recite the ***Al HaNissim* prayer in the evening, morning and afternoon prayers, as well as in the Grace After Meals.** In the morning service there is a **special reading from the Torah Scroll** in the synagogue.



Additional Purim Observances

7) Torah Reading of "Zachor"

On the Shabbat before Purim, this year March 3, 2007, a special reading is held in the synagogue of the Torah section called *Zachor* ("Remember"), in which we are enjoined to remember the deeds of (the nation of) Amalek (Haman's ancestor) who sought to destroy the Jewish people.

8) The Fast of Esther

To commemorate the day of prayer and fasting that the Jewish people held at Esther's request, we fast on the day before Purim, this year on Thursday, March 1, 2007, (because we don't fast on Shabbat) from approximately an hour before sunrise until nightfall (approximately 40 minutes after sunset).

9) The "Half Coins" (*Machatzit Hashekel*)

It is a tradition to give three half-dollar coins to charity to commemorate the half-shekel that each Jew contributed as his share in the communal offerings in the time of the Holy Temple.

This custom, usually performed in the synagogue, is done on the afternoon of the "Fast of Esther," or before the reading of the Megillah.

10-11) Purim Customs: Masquerades and Hamantashen

A time-honored Purim custom is for **children to dress up** and disguise themselves—an allusion to the fact that the miracle of Purim was disguised in natural garments. This is also the significance behind a traditional Purim food, the *hamantash* — a pastry whose filling is hidden within a three-cornered crust.

12) Shushan Purim

The fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar are celebrated as Purim. The specific day on which Purim is celebrated depends on the location; in places where Purim is celebrated on the fourteenth, it is not celebrated on the fifteenth and vice versa.

Why were different days established as Purim in different cities?



Why wasn't one day chosen as Purim in all cities, just as other festivals are celebrated on the same day in every city? In Shushan the battle took place on the thirteenth and fourteenth of Adar and the people rested and celebrated only on the fifteenth. It was therefore proper that only the city of Shushan should celebrate on the fifteenth of Adar, for it was only there that Purim was celebrated on that day.



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I Shall Sing

My Amazing First-Time Experience in Israel – Highlights and Reflections

By Robert Hadad-Zlokower

A And suddenly our bus emerged from the tunnel. I looked out, and there it was: Jerusalem.

For a moment I lost my breath, as if I were about to go down a roller coaster. I lost the ability to speak.

"Holy..." I finally said, breaking my silence. I had intended to follow that word with some sort of expletive, the word "smokes," or maybe even the word "cow" but my tongue stopped itself. Holy, that's all I could mutter. Holy.

As I watched the yellow and bronze-colored dots of the nighttime cityscape glide by, Tali, the tour guide, put a CD in the stereo. Singer Shuli Natan's mellifluous voice filled my ears.

*"Yerushalayim shel zahav,
Veshel nechoshet veshel or
Halo lechol shirayich Ani kinor."
[Trans. Oh Jerusalem of gold
and of light and of bronze,
I am the lute of all your songs.]"*

The bus stopped at Haas Promenade, the overlook from which Abraham supposedly first saw Mount Moriah, the Temple Mount. We disembarked to catch a view of Jerusalem from the south. We said a blessing and boarded the bus.

Welcome Home

This past winter break I was privileged to ride aboard Mayanot Bus 11 on a free trip to Israel provided by Taglit-Birthright. The 10 days which really felt like 10 weeks were jam-packed with visits to valleys and mountaintops, good times at yeshivas and dance parties, rides on jeeps and camels, and so much more. Trekking for the first time across the Promised Land was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had as a tourist and as a spiritual journeyer.

"Welcome home," were the first words of an Israeli tour guide as he greeted us in Ben Gurion airport. Kind of ironic, I thought.

Before we even stepped foot in a hotel, our tour guides Tali and Ilan took us to a thicket where we individually planted saplings. The act of planting a tree was a sort of metaphor. It was paying homage that our roots were already planted here (the covenant of our forefathers). It was also a testimony that we can still plant our roots here today. Recalling the "welcome home" greeting of that tour guide, I now realize that tucked into this man's irony was a gem of truth. This is home.

In the West, Taking a Bite out of Israel

We arrived at our hotel near Tel-Aviv in time for Shabbos. Our 40-person tour group was equipped with a bus driver, two tour guides, and an armed guard. We also



had Rabbi Denebeim, who was armed with limitless knowledge and a fiery personality.

"We are eating Israel," Rabbi Denebeim said the second day, "and in turn we are becoming Israel." In other words, eating Israeli food changed our bodies from an "America" chemical make-up to an "Israel" make-up. As for me, I was nourished by more than roadside snacks or kosher Chinese food. Experiences like the *niggunim* that we sang that first Shabbos nourished my soul. The change in my composition wasn't just physical.

While in the west we went into Independence Hall where Ben Gurion made Israel's declaration in 1948. The speaker at the hall was so passionate in her telling of the story of independence and in her first-hand reflection of life as an Israeli. "No mother wants to send her son to the army," she said. "But we do it because we know we have to."

On Sunday night all the Birthright groups convened at the "Mega-event" where we enjoyed a concert and a dance-party and heard Israel Prime Minister Ehud Olmert speak. Never before had I heard two thousand young-adults cheer "Yisroel, Yisroel, Yisroel!"

In the North, War-Stories and Mountaintops

A handful of soldiers accompanied us on the next leg of our tour. When they changed into civilian clothing, they appeared indistinguishable from the rest of our group after all, they were our age (18-26). I suppose one major difference was while we were sitting comfortably in air-conditioned rooms watching CNN this summer, some of these soldiers were defending Israel from Hezbollah.

The images, sounds, feelings that I've described to you are incomplete. But even if I were to paint for you the most vivid picture of my trip it would still be lacking. The only true way to relive my trip is to go to Israel and experience it for yourself. You will be amazed.

One veteran of this summer's fighting in Lebanon told us a few stories. Before leaving his family, his father put his hands on his son's (this veteran's) shoulders and gave him a blessing. The father had to say it twice because he was too choked up with tears to say it clearly the first time. The veteran also shared with us how one officer's infantry was ambushed. The officer, mortally wounded and gushing blood, called a fellow soldier on the radio. "Come here and say the 'Shema' with me," the officer had said. Upon hearing this, I almost cried.

We rode jeeps in the Golan Heights. "Over those mountains is Lebanon...they shot some Ketushya rockets from there," a tour guide pointed out while we were atop a hill. "This summer you could see smoke coming from where the rockets hit." He then pointed to some villages.

The angst of war left the soldiers, however, as we volunteered to spend a few hours with Ethiopian child-refugees. We did arts-and-crafts and played soccer. The children smiled when we gave them lollypops.

We visited a secluded village in the Galilee, where we ate pitas (whose grain were grown right there on the hillside) with hyssop and rode donkeys over ancient trails. We went to the Golan Heights Winery. At the Gadot Observation point we looked out at the expanse of lush

greenery. This valley used to be infested with malaria and ridden with swamps; now it is one of the most fertile areas on earth. It is said that the return of ripening of fruits in Eretz Yisroel is a sign that Mashiach is coming soon.

One late-afternoon, our group ascended to the peak of Mt. Arbel. From atop thousand-foot cliffs we could look out to see Lake Kinneret and Lower Galilee basking in the orange setting-sun.

A couple days later we toured the mystical city of Tsfat, birthplace of the Kabbalah. While visiting one of the quaint and colorful synagogues we were told a story. During the Lebanon War this past summer, a congregation was praying in the shul. Just as they were bowing for the "Modim" prayer an enemy projectile whizzed in over their backs and crashed into the *bima*. Nobody was hurt.

Where Heaven Touches Earth

Finally, after much anticipation, at about halfway through our trip, we arrived in Jerusalem. City of kings. City of prophets. City of holiness.

We went spelunking in the Beit Guvrin caves, below the site of a Maccabean village. We ventured to the City of David and Tel Azeka (overlooking the valley where David fought Goliath). We hung out at Ben Yehuda Street, Jerusalem's lively downtown area and toured Mt. Herzl, location of the National Cemetery. We spent one morning learning at the Mayanot Yeshiva; I felt a connection to our sages of yore (I stayed four days learning in this yeshiva after the end of the Birthright trip).

The most emotional part of the trip for me was touring Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum. Walking through the children's memorial (a pitch black room peppered with thousands of dime-sized globes of light). Watching a video of Hitler yelling to a crowd that the solution to their problems was extermination of the Jews. "I am a prophet," Hitler said. I felt sick.

Yet, despite the rancor that bubbled in my stomach, the sadness that bemoaned in my chest, I had a feeling of resolution. The Nazis, the Crusades, the Hellenes, the Romans, the Babylonians, the slavery in Egypt; the fact that we are still alive today is proof of our strength as a chosen people. And we don't need a prophet to tell us that.

Of course a high point for me was visiting the Western Wall. For a dramatic effect, Tali and Ilan had us cover our eyes as they guided us down the stone stairs of the Old City. When we reached an overlook we unshielded our eyes and gazed at the mount: the place where the holy Temple once stood, the first rock of the world lays, Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac, Jacob had his dream of the ladder, and countless Jews of history, famous and not-so-famous, had walked. Towards the Temple Mount is where every Jew of the world faces when he prays; this is the place of Kodesh Hakodashim, the Holy of Holies.

While praying at the Wall I was overcome with feelings of cleanliness, tranquility, and wholeness; this was very special for me. Shalom is one of the root words in Jerusalem; it literally means completeness.

Jerusalem. Where else can you go and hear the Jews praying by the Western Wall, the Christian Church bells ringing, and the Muslim call to worship simultaneously? Though three major religions divide the 3,000-year-old city, there's one aspect of it that remains intact: its holiness. Some say this is where heaven touches earth.

How Good and How Pleasant It Is

In the middle of our stay in Jerusalem we drove to the south. Here we slept in Bedouin Tents and rode camels in the



Robert in the library at Mayanot Yeshiva in Jerusalem, where he spent some time studying after the birthright trip.

Negev Desert. We climbed Mount Massada (site of an ancient palace and final stand-off between the Jews and the Romans.)

On our way to the Dead Sea we ventured into the beautiful nature reserve of Ein Gedi, mentioned in King Solomon's Song of Songs. The oasis, laden with boulders, caves, and majestic waterfalls, is where King David had hid from Saul and his 3,000-man army.

We floated blithely in the Dead Sea. On the other side is the country Jordan. Suddenly, an F-16 Israeli jet ripped across the sky. Border patrol, I suppose.

Like something out of a happy cartoon movie, we began to swim in formation and sing. Grabbing a hold of the person's feet in front of us, we wiggled forward and then into a circle. We sang the words of a joyous tune that Tali had taught us our first night in Israel.

"Hiinei matov, hinei matovu manayim,

Shehvet achim, achim gam yachahd!

[Trans. How good and how pleasant it is

When brothers and sisters dwell together in unity.]

At this moment we were like the lute of all G-d's songs. This was the pinnacle of my trip.

The Greatest Distance

I've learned two lessons as a journalist. First: we can learn only so much from studying; the rest is in experience. The images, sounds, feelings that I've described to you are incomplete. But even if I were to paint for you the most vivid picture of my trip it would still be lacking. The only true way to relive my trip is to go to Israel and experience it for yourself. You will be amazed.

I learned the second lesson from a philosophy and hiking instructor, James. James had an affinity for travel and adventure. I interviewed him after he decided to leave my school to venture to Scotland.

Looking back at my Israel trip, I realize that we covered thousands of miles of terrain. But in that interview, James taught me that "The greatest distance traveled is in our hearts."

With that, I'd like to express my gratitude to Birthright and all the people that made my trip possible. And in the words of James, "Thanks. I've covered a lot of ground."

Robert Hadad-Zlokower is a Freshman, English Major. He is a staff reporter for Pipe Dream and the Editor in Chief of Hatikva Magazine.

Chabad HAPPENINGS



Comedian Marc Weiner rocks the house at Chabad Cafe

On Wednesday January 31, Cafe Chabad, seeing a record crowd with over 125 students, hosted famed comic Marc Weiner. Best known for his '90s Nickelodeon show "Weinerville," Weiner presented Jewber Jabber, featuring his hilariously confounding first encounters with Orthodox Judaism that led him toward greater Jewish observance. Doing his classic shtick most of the time while ingeniously improvising off the crowd with his sharp wit, Weiner's show kept such strong momentum that attendees begged him to keep going after over an hour of never-ending belly laughs. Weiner bent to the massive peer pressure, losing no time donning an army uniform with a few forks in the front pocket and shouting the differences between "vultures," "scrapers," and "fuhlalers" at Bar and Bat Mitzvah kiddushes. Weiner also played off the crowd to do a true-to-life "Swiper" routine as "Dora the Explorer" character Swiper the Fox, which Weiner voices along with the show's "Map." The crowd thoroughly enjoyed being "Weinerized," and we hope to see everyone at the next Chabad Cafe on April 27!



Gourmet Cooking with Yael

Lucky participants in a cooking workshop series with Yael Lewin have been learning a lot about cooking and enjoying the scrumptious fruit of their labor.



Chabad Hits the Slopes on First Skiing Trip!

Our first annual ski trip to beautiful Greek Peak was a resounding success (we apologize to those whom we had to turn down, next year we plan to take two buses!) with people having a blast skiing, tubing and snow boarding. Nothing like having a good time with friends!



Shabbat 1500, from Page 1

joyous event," said Jess Koss, Hillel student president.

"We're looking for people to bring to bring peers from their classes, fraternities and sororities, dorms, professional groups, sport teams or any other of their varied involvements," explained David Schneid, JHP fellow for Binghamton.

"Our campus has a tremendously vibrant Jewish life but there are still many Jewish men and women who are not as connected Jewishly as they can be. This is a wonderful way to change that" said Rabbi Aaron Slonim.

At Shabbat 1500 tables of ten will be hosted by students who bring their group of friends to this special evening; two people can also host a table together. If you are interested in acting as a host for this event please call the Chabad office at 797-0015 or e-mail aslonim@chabad.edu.



Super Bowl Party

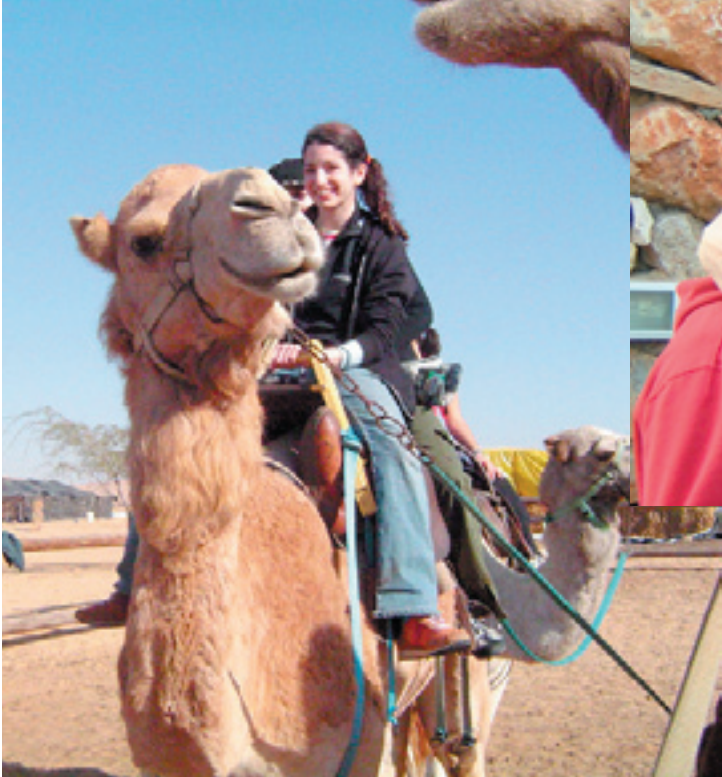
Chabad's Super Bowl Party on Feb. 4 featured a huge screen, the Super Bowl Special from Dougie's in Brooklyn, and loads of energy from Bears fans, Colts fans, and those who didn't care who won!



For many more pictures of these and other Chabad activities, please see our website:

www.ChabadofBinghamton.com

Chabad HAPPENINGS



**Mayanot/Birthright trip
Winter 2007 – absolutely
Sabbaba (cool)!**

Lucky Binghamton students joined Mayanot/birthright bus #11 for the trip of a lifetime this winter. The ten-day trip of non stop activity took students all over Israel and introduced them to the many facets of life in that country. Highlights included Shabbat at the Kotel, climbing Massada, Jeeping in the North, Camel Riding in the South, the Mega Event, interfacing with soldiers and soooo much more! We can't wait to get back to Israel again!

Purim Feast, from Page 1

of New York City, have made him an outstanding comedian. At the Abbott's Convention 2002 he was awarded the Senator Crandall Award for Comedy. At the CAM Convention he worked with Jeff McBride. After his performance Jeff McBride said "He is the only magician I've ever seen who can bring down the house with a stock trick." In Las Vegas at the SAM National Convention Chris Capehart again proved himself to be a master of magic by being the Master of Ceremony for the show. Both Mike Miller and Joan Caesar have labeled Chris Capehart a promoters dream. Chris Capehart is a regular headliner at "Monday Night Magic" in New York City. He has performed in Atlantic City, Las Vegas, New York, Philadelphia, Hollywood, Chicago, Denver at the

Magic Castle in Hollywood, California and at The Blackpool Magic Convention in England to name a few locations.

Chris Capehart has been dubbed "The Ring Master" and for good reasons. The three-ring routine is one of the cornerstones of magical illusions. Chris's three-ring routine has been acclaimed by some of the world's most renowned magicians as "the best of the best." He mesmerizes magicians and audiences with a close-up ring routine more commonly performed at a distance.

In the past, the event has been a sold-out event; reservations will be accepted on a first come, first served basis and can be made by calling the Chabad House office at 797-0015 or writing aslonim@binghamton.edu.



Students gathered at the West Side Chabad House on Feb. 17 for a Chocolate and Love program in which they discussed love and relationships from the Jewish perspective with Rabbi and Mrs. Lewin.



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Chabad Alumni News

Mazel Tovs!

Class of '90

■ Naomi (Levin) and Robert Jackman announce the birth of their son, Nathan Michael (Natan Michael), on October 20, 2006. Nathan was welcomed home by big sister Hannah and big brother Adam.

Class of '93

■ Marc and Kayla Warren announce the birth of their daughter, Talia Batya, on November 30, 2006. Talia was welcomed home by big brothers and sister, Yitzy, Chaya and Yechiel.

Class of '94

■ Daniel and Kara Margolis announce the birth of their son, Ryan Harrison - Ronen Chanoch, on January 18, 2007.

Class of '95

■ Josh and Paula (Stein) Weisman announce the birth of their daughter, Eliana Sophia, on December 8, 2007. She was welcomed home by big sister and brother Adi and Aron.

■ Pninit (Ivri) and Wayne Lampert announce the birth of their daughter Dalia Rena, on February 15, 2006.

Class of '96

■ David and Debbie Marmor announce the birth of their daughter, Shira Nechama, on Feb. 4, 2007.

■ Shayne (Green) and Stu Kesler announce the birth of their twin daughters, Eden Maya (Aviva Malka) and Nira Grace (Nira Galit), on December 18, 2006. The girls were welcomed home by big brother Elijah.

■ Paula (Stein) and Josh Weisman announce the birth of their daughter Eliana Sophia. See '95 for complete details.

Class of '97

■ Caroline (Schanzer) and David Kinzelberg announce the birth of their son, Naftali Ozer, Nathaniel, on January 1, 2007. Naftali was welcomed home by big brothers Coby and Alec.

Class of '98

■ Beth (Applebome) and Avi Cohen announce the birth of their son, Joseph Eli (Yosef Eliyahu), on December 2, 2006

Class of '99

■ Doron and Staci Zeif announce the birth of their daughter, Kira Hadara, born December 11, 2006.

■ Will Zaritt announces his marriage to Veronique Jurist-Schulman on November 12, 2006. They make their home in Boston, Mass and have changed their last name to Corrdin.

■ Rob and Ofie Ernst announce the birth of their son, Yosef Shlomo, on January 5, 2007.

■ Michael and Irina Kimyagarov announce the birth of their daughter Katerina-Tamara, on August 31, 2006. She was welcomed home by big sister Berta.

Class of '00

■ Tova (Beth Alexander) and Yoel Robinson announce the birth of their daughter, Sima, on December 21, 2006. Sima was welcomed home by big brother, Shimshon David.

Class of '01

■ Kerry (Beyowitz) and David Newman announce the birth of their son, Ilan Avraham, on November 27, 2006.

■ Liat Bronfeld announces her engagement to Jonathan Zelter; a July 29, 2007 wedding is planned. Liat coordinates religious and educational programming at Congregation Habonim in NYC. Jonathan is a manager at Macy's leasing dept. They will make their home in NYC.

Class of '02

■ Andrew and Chana (Ritter) Sidi announce the birth of their son, Ami Yehudah, on December 6, 2006. Ami was welcomed home by big sister Chava Rochel.

■ Ari Hershkowitz aka "Hershy" announces his engagement to Leah Shapiro; a July 1, 2007 wedding is planned. Ari is an accountant with Loeb & Troper; Leah is graduating from Stern College in May 2007 and plans to work as a pre-school teacher. They will make their home in Queens, NY.

■ Florie (Sommer) and Barry Hupert announce the birth of their daughter, Beatrice Pearl, on January 4, 2007. Beatrice was welcomed home by big brother Nathan.

Class of '03

■ Alisa Burman and Jeremy Weiser announce their engagement; a June 24, 2007 wedding is planned. Alisa teaches second grade at the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan, Jeremy is the Director of Operations at SAI Consultants Ltd. in Manhattan. They will make their home in Manhattan.

■ Karen Bochner announces her engagement to Yaniv Kerem; a June 3, 2007 wedding is planned. Karen is an Organizational Psychologist at Martha Stewart Living, Yaniv is a Medical student at Loyola University. They will make their home in Chicago.

■ Aliza Langman announces her engagement to Dr. William Krieger; a Summer 2007 wedding is planned. Aliza is a doctoral student working on her Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the University of Rhode Island, William is a professor of philosophy at the University of Rhode Island. They will make their home in Providence, RI.

■ Chana (Ritter) and Andrew Sidi announce the birth of their son, Ami Yehudah. See '02 for complete details.

Class of '04

■ Danit Greenfield announces her engagement to Eric Taub; a summer 2007 wedding is planned. Danit is a guidance counselor at Brooklyn Technical High School, Eric is the Financial Manager at Eng-Wong, Taub & Associates, they will make their home in Manhattan.

■ Josh Zekowitz announces his engagement to Rebecca Fruchter; a June 25, 2007 wedding is planned. Josh is a first year law student at New York Law School; Rebecca is graduating Queens College and plans to attend a graduate program for Speech Pathology next year.

Send us your Mazel Tovs to rslonim@chabadofbinghamton.com so we can share them with the world!!

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