

CHABAD
OF BINGHAMTON

בס"ד

הקשר Hakesher

the connection

Gala Anniversary Dinner

**Pictorial Review
and Impressions** Page 15



DECEMBER 2010 | KISLEV 5771

**CHANUKAH
in a New Light**

Page 6

DEAR FRIEND,

I write this just a few days after returning from the annual International Conference for Chabad *Shluchim*, emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. First convened by the Rebbe in 1984, and attended that year by 65 US based *shluchim*, the conference this year drew almost 4000 *Shluchim* from some 90 countries. When the Rebbe introduced the notion of this convention his stated mandate was “*Ish es ra-aihu yaazora uliachiv yomar chazak*,” “Let one man help the other and to his brother say: be strengthened! (Isaiah 41:6)”.



Indeed, the conference offered a panoply of creative ideas for programming, the chance to reconnect with old friends and network with colleagues, and practical guidance in hundreds of areas. On display and for sale were resources of all kinds and in attendance to lead workshops and answer questions were specialist in many fields. But the salient feature of the conference has always been the inspiration gained from coming together as one. It's that simple.

There are many things I heard at the conference but it's what I saw that made the deepest impression.

I saw *Shluchim* who have been at their posts for over fifty years and *Shluchim* who have embarked on their mission just a year or two ago, united in the same vision.

I saw *Shluchim* from the Far East, the Middle East, North, South, and Central America, Europe, Eastern Europe, the Former Soviet Union, North and South Africa, and all points in Asia — *shluchim* who serve populations extremely diverse — locked in synergy, bound as one by their mandate.

I saw *Shluchim* who are pulpit rabbis, principals and teachers. I saw *Shluchim* who direct student centers, Friendship Circle, Smile on Senior programs, pre-schools, Hebrew schools, drug rehabilitation centers and that's just the beginning. But those distinctions didn't figure on an essential level.

I saw as many different personalities and working styles as I saw *Shluchim*, all driven by the same passion: to bring a joyous, living, pulsating, relevant Yiddishkeit to the Jews of their country, region, state, city or university.

I saw 600 “young *shluchim*,” children born to the mission their parents chose, enjoying their own parallel convention.

It was awe inspiring.

I know we all wear white and black garb and sport the same fedoras; there are running “where's Waldo” jokes about how you can't tell us apart. But anyone who knows even two Chabad rabbis can testify to the fallacy of that myth. The truly interesting thing is not how alike we are but how despite our many differences we remain so connected, in our life's work and through the teachings of our Rebbe. The Rebbe's love and concern for every Jew is what drove his “army.” And it is that love and concern and vision of a world perfected and redeemed that inspires us today.

The lessons of Chanukah read like a handbook for *Shlichus*:

Don't back down in the face of darkness; illuminate the night.

Don't keep it for yourself; let the light shine out for all to see.

And never be satisfied with what you did yesterday; each day must see greater effort and more light shed.

We have our work cut out for us; in partnership with you, our friends, we will succeed.

All of us at Chabad of Binghamton wish you a very joyous and luminous Chanukah.

Nihiye B'keshet, let's stay connected and be in touch!

Rabbi Aaron Slonim

Rabbi Aaron Slonim



Executive Director

Rabbi Aaron Slonim

Education Director

Mrs. Rivkah Slonim

Chabad Downtown and Education

Rabbi Zalman & Rochel Chein

Programming and Development

Rabbi Levi & Hadasa Slonim

President

Mr. Barry Newman

Vice President

Mr. Michael Wright

Women's League Chairperson

Mrs. Paula Rubin

Board Members

Mr. Richard Frankel

Mr. Charles Gilinsky

Mr. Alfred Lavker

Mr. Alan Piaker

Solomon Polachek Ph.D.

Liz Rosenberg Ph.D.

Dr. Charles Rubin

Mr. Brian Savitch

Mrs. Susan Walker

Founding Board Members

Mr. Abe L. Piaker OBM

Prof. Philip M. Piaker OBM

Dr. Barrett J. Raff OBM

**Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life
at Binghamton University**

420 Murray Hill Rd • Vestal, NY 13850

607-797-0015

info@chabadofbinghamton.com

www.JewishBU.com

Hakasher הקשר
the connection

Issue #4

Published by

CHABAD OF BINGHAMTON

Contact us at Hakasher@JewishBU.com

Editor Rivkah Slonim

Staff Writer Alan Zeitlin

Proofreading Devorah Leah Popack,
Marlene Serkin

Design & Printing The Printhouse

Cover & Dinner Photos: Yisroel Teichman

Select Photos: Michael Weinberg

Other Photos: Dave Katz, Liz Joyce,
Nicole Palermo, Jiang Wu

CONTENTS



For information about dedication opportunities please visit www.JewishBU.com/Hakasher



3 Essential Oil
Based on the teachings of the Rebbe

4 INSPIRATIONAL VOICES
Saving The World

5 STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
Heather Fink

10 ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Josh November

12 ALL IN THE FAMILY
Alumni News

13 KADISH WITH OPRAH
Simcha Jacobovici

14 FACULTY SPOTLIGHT
Liz Rosenberg

23 PHOTO GALLERY
Chabad in Action

30 ON MY MIND
Paul Brick

**SPECIAL
FEATURES:**

15 Celebration 25

32 The Rebbe's Army



Essential Oil

Yanki Tauber



When the royal Hasmonean family overpowered and was victorious over [the Greeks], they searched and found only a single cruse of pure oil... enough to light the menorah for a single day.

A miracle occurred, and they lit the menorah with this oil for eight days.

On the following year, they established these [eight days] as days of festivity and praise and thanksgiving to G-d.

(Talmud, Shabbat 21b)

Many miracles, great and small, accompanied the liberation of Israel from Hellenic dominance and the reclaiming of the Holy Temple as the lighthouse of G-d. But there is one particular miracle, the Talmud is saying, that is the sum and substance of Chanukah: the miracle of the small cruse of pure oil that burned for eight days.

The challenge faced by the Jewish people at that time was unlike any that had confronted them before. Hellenism, a noxious blend of hedonism and philosophy, could not

be resisted by the conventional tools of Jewish learning and tradition. Only the cruse of pure oil—the supra-rational, supra-egotistical essence of the Jewish soul, from which stems the Jews intrinsic self-sacrificial loyalty to G-d could illuminate the way out of the mudswamps of Hella. Only by evoking this inner reserve of uncontaminable oil were we able to banish the pagan invader from G-d's home and rekindle the torch of Israel as a light unto the nations.


But this was oil sufficient for only a single day. By nature, man's highest powers flare brightly and fleetingly, soon receding to the supra-conscious, supra-behavioral place from which they have come. When a person's deepest self is challenged, the essential oil of his soul is stimulated, and no force on earth can still its flame; but then the moment passes, the cataclysmic levels off into the routine, and the person is left with

his ordinary, mortal self.

The miracle of Chanukah was that they lit the menorah with this oil for eight days—that the flame of selfless sacrifice blazed beyond a moment of truth, beyond a day of reckoning. That the small pure cruse of oil burned beyond its one-day lifespan for an additional week, illuminating the seven chambers of the soul (Kabbalistic teaching enumerates seven middot or basic character traits—love, restraint, harmony, ambition, devotion, bonding and receptiveness—from which stem all feelings and motivations of the heart). This was no mere flash of light in a sea of darkness, but a flame destined to shed purity and light for all generations, under all conditions.

Thus the Talmud relates that it was only on the following year that these eight days were established as

When a person's deepest self is challenged, the essential oil of his soul is stimulated, and no force on earth can still its flame.

the festival of Chanukah. A year is a microcosm of time, embodying all of times seasons and transmutations. So it was only on the following year, after it had weathered all fluctuations of the annual cycle, that the victory of Chanukah could be installed as a permanent fixture in our lives. 

Saving the World in 15 Minutes

Rabbi Dov Greenberg

Ayouth was picking up starfish stranded by the retreating tide and throwing them back into the sea to save them. A man went up to him and said, "This beach goes on for miles, and there are thousands of starfish. Your efforts are futile, it doesn't make a difference!" The boy looked at the starfish in his hand and threw it into the water. "To this one," he said, "It makes all the difference."

That story captures a fundamental idea in Jewish thought. We can't fix the world all at once. We do it one day at a time, one person at a time, one deed at a time. A single life, say our sages, is like a world. Save a life and you save a world. Change a life and you begin to change the world.

We call this Tikkun Olam, perfecting the world. Judaism believes that it is no accident that we are here, at this time and place, with these gifts and capabilities, and the opportunity to make a difference. This belief is known as divine providence: the idea that G-d is active in our lives as individuals, not only, as the Greek philosophers believed, concerned with universals.

We are here because there is a task that only we can fulfill. We can never know the ripple of consequences set in motion by the slightest act.

One day, so the story goes, a poor Scottish farmer Fleming heard a cry for help from a nearby swamp. There, caught up to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the youth from a slow and painful death.

The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's modest home. A rich nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy.

"I want to repay you," said the nobleman, "You saved my son's life."

"No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied, waving off the offer. At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door.

"Is that your son?" the nobleman asked.

"Yes," the farmer replied proudly.

"Please let me provide him with my own son's level of education. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll surely grow to be a man we will both be proud of."

"Farmer Fleming's son attended the best schools, graduated from Medical School in London, and became known as Sir Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin.

Years later, the nobleman's son was stricken with pneumonia. What saved his life? Penicillin. The name of the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill. His son's name? Sir Winston Churchill. Historically true? I don't know. But morally it is.

Our acts make a difference, sometimes all the difference in the world. Maimonides, one of the greatest sages of the Middle Ages, makes a remarkable statement in the midst of his presentation of laws of repentance: "Everyone should regard himself and the whole world as evenly poised between good and guilt." If he commits a sin, he tilts the balance of his fate and that of the world to guilt, causing destruction. If he performs a good deed, he shifts the balance of his fate and that of the world to good, bringing salvation and deliverance."

One act, says Maimonides, can change a life, and transform a world. How so? Our acts trigger a chain of consequences - psychological, spiritual, and historical - that reverberate in incalculable ways. Could Farmer Fleming have known that this would change his son's life, and that his discovery of penicillin would save so many others? Could Fleming have known the rescued child would one day stand alone to save the world from fascism?

Obviously not. He could not have known it because the human future is inherently unknowable. But this we know: We are here, now, in this place, among these people, in these circumstances, so that we can do the act or say the word that will light a candle of hope and holiness in a dark world. "A little light," said the Jewish mystics, "drives away much darkness." And when light is joined to light, mine to yours and yours to others, the dance of flames, each so small, yet so beautiful together, begins to bathe the world in the glow of the divine presence.



Rabbi Dov Greenberg is the executive Director of Chabad at Stanford University. E-mail: Info@chabadstanford.org



Heather Fink '11

STUDENT PUTS HER MIND TO DECLUTTERING

Alyx Rimberg '13

Benjamin Franklin once said: “Age ain’t nothin’ but a number.” Heather Fink, while only an undergraduate student at Binghamton University, is working on publishing her research on hoarding. Her study and the resulting data is only the second scientific attempt to unravel the causation behind hoarding.

Heather’s interest in hoarders stems from her own childhood surroundings. New York City, where stores, if sewn shut, would breach at the seams, and shoppers clutching handfuls of useless items flood the streets, is a city that epitomizes clutter. Although Heather has no personal relationship to any hoarders, it is easy to comprehend her urge to understand the psychological phenomenon behind clutter. After all, “location, location, location.”

Hoarders are perfectionists who have difficulty discarding their possessions. A Hoarder essentially defines themselves through their belongings, without which they feel naked of an identity. Hoarders are generally single, because they are embarrassed by their homes. As a result depression creeps into their lives, and they alienate themselves from their surroundings. Heather is particularly interested in this topic because currently, hoarding is coupled with OCD. It concerns her that these terms are plowed together and hoarders are not receiving proper treatment for their illness. People use the term pack rat freely but they don’t often realize just how debilitating hoarding can be. On a TLC Hoarding show an individual famously said, “I am a homeless person, with a home.” His belongings had become so vast, that they took over his apartment. Rather than throw away his personal possessions, this man preferred to be confined to his closet with an old futon. His mental illness allowed his useless garbage to kick him out of his own home.

Heather sees hoarding in a somewhat different light from most: She calls it “a gift that is unfortunately assumed to be a curse.” “Think of an autistic idiot savant,” explains Heather.



“They are brilliant; they each have a special gift that they can share with the world; however their gift is masked by an unfortunate inability to interact with the outside world.” Hoarding is ironically similar. Hoarders have incredible talent that is unfortunately obscured by the negative repercussions of their behavior. A hoarder has the mind of an artist. They see the world vibrantly; everything around them has purpose, options are infinite. Their creativity is constantly on overdrive. A Hoarder can look at the most mundane, even broken object, and envision a purpose for it, thus deem it invaluable.

Heather is currently finishing up her Psychology major and is hoping to attend the University of Miami and receive her PhD there while working alongside a professor who is furthering hoarding studies. She often conducts research in the anxiety clinic and works at the career development center as a peer advisor guiding other students towards their own career and internship goals. Heather hopes she can make a real contribution and help those crippled by their hoarding disability let go of the clutter and live life freely.

Alyx Rimberg '13 is an English Rhetoric and Global Studies major. Alyx did an internship with the Jerusalem Post in the summer of 2010. Currently she pens the “Word on the Brain” column in the BU Free Press.

Chanukah in a **NEW LIGHT**

Did Chanukah happen years ago or is it happening now?

Looking at events today, you start to wonder.

The story of a little light pushing away an empire of darkness, human sensibility defying terror and brute force, life and growth overcoming destruction—the battle is very much alive within each of us, and in the world outside of us.

The victory of light over darkness is the cosmic megadrama—the ongoing story of all that is.

The victory occurs at every winter solstice and at the dawn of each day.

It is found in every decision to do good in the face of evil, to be kind where there is cruelty and to build where others destroy.

Chanukah is more than a holiday; It is an eight-day spiritual journey.



Chanukah...

...Then and Now

NIGHT 1



Alexander the Great was the leader of the Greek Empire who by the age of 21 had conquered most of the known world. He respected the Jews. He didn't want to wage war against tiny Judea; he only required heavy taxes. The Talmud details many conversations that young Alexander had with the Jewish Sages, many of whom traveled to Greece to tutor royalty.

Alexander's death in 165 B.C.E. split the Greek empire into three territories: Greece, Egypt, and Syria. Ten years later, in 175 B.C.E., Antiochus IV rose to power over the Syrian territories, which included Israel. The Syrian Greeks, called Seleucids, were not interested in co-existence, but in assimilation.

The Talmud, the Book of the Maccabees, Josephus and other works detail the events of Chanukah. Antiochus IV sent his ministers to force Greek culture on the people of Israel. Most Jews conformed. What else could they do against the might of the empire? The Zohar says of this period: "The Greeks darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees."

The festival of Chanukah is about light overcoming darkness. Our world is currently experiencing a particularly dark time. We have become apprehensive, even about opening the letters in our mailbox. Our sons, daughters, friends and neighbors are half way around the world, fighting an enemy that has no borders.

"The soul of man is a lamp of G-d" (Proverbs 23:27). Our challenge, whether we are on the front lines or fighting rush hour at home, is to bring light into the world. The reason the Chanukah candles are lit after nightfall is to remind us that even in our darkest moments, we have the potential to illuminate if we kindle a flame.

NIGHT 2



Antiochus IV, called Epiphanies (the Illustrious) by his friends, and Epimanes (the Madman) by his enemies, did not build ghettos, force conversions or set out to annihilate the Jewish people, as Pharaoh or Nebuchadnezzar

had plotted before him. Neither did he intend to destroy their culture. Instead, he outlawed the observance of specific mitzvot (Divine actions), predicting that when the Jews would cease to observe these precepts, it would lead to the end of Judaism as a unique religion and nation. He wanted the Jews to be just another conquered tribe. And so, he declared war against their souls.

The Greeks were great philosophers. They acknowledged the mitzvot as part of a great culture, and the Torah as a great work of Jewish literature. What they would not tolerate was that "G-d, Creator of the Universe, ordained the practice of these mitzvot." In the words of the prayer recited on Chanukah, the Greeks set out to have the Jews forget "[G-d's] Torah," and to cease observing "[G-d's] commandments."

Whenever we do a mitzvah, we become G-d's autograph on His masterpiece, declaring for all that this is not a jungle where the strong devour the weak. It is a beautiful garden, filled with the light of its Creator.

NIGHT 3



Hellenism, the Greek culture, meant accepting its pagan gods and Greek philosophy. Jews who were sympathetic to the Hellenistic view quickly gained power and prominence. But many Jews remained loyal to their beliefs. Eliezer, a Kohen (Jewish priest), was executed because he refused to abandon his Jewish faith. Many Jewish women were murdered for having their sons circumcised. Seven sons of Hanna, a simple Jewish woman, were put to death for refusing to bow down to pagan gods.

The big trouble for the Seleucids began in the village of Mod'in, when the aged Kohen Mattisyahu cried out, "Whoever is for G-d, join me!" Thus, the fight for religious freedom began.

King Solomon wrote, "Everything has its season... A time to be born, a time to die... A time for war, a time for peace" (Ecclesiastes). In Judaism, peace is the ultimate goal. Yet, if one is being attacked, Jewish law forbids a passive stance. Peace and the sanctity of human life requires at times, that one must

defend one's self, one's family and one's country.

Despite the fact that the Maccabees were fewer in strength and in numbers, they stood up against the oppressor with complete faith in G-d's mercy. One lesson of Chanukah is that when we resolve to introduce spirituality into our lives, G-d assists us well beyond our limitations. G-d tells His children, "Make for Me a small opening, like the eye of a needle, and I will open for you and opening through which caravans can enter" (Midrash). We simply need to begin the process for G-d to help us attain that which we perceived as unattainable.



Antiochus IV outlawed three specific mitzvot and rendered their practice punishable by death. These mitzvot were "Shabbat," which is a testimony to the fact that there is a Creator Who rested on the seventh day; "Blessing the New Month," which determines when Jews can sanctify their holidays; and "Circumcision," which imbues holiness into the human body. The Spiritual ghetto that Antiochus IV tried to force on the Jewish people was a world without a Creator, time without sanctity and people with no connection to the Divine.

Though a person might have a burning desire to be spiritual, a concrete action is needed to ignite a flame. Lacking the oil of genuine substance, one's passion can quickly fade, failing to introduce any enduring light into the world. A life without mitzvot is like a wick without oil—it yields little or no light.

There are nine branches on the Chanukah menorah, even though Chanukah is celebrated for eight days. The ninth branch is the shamash, the "servant" candle, which stands apart from the other candles. This candle is lit so that when we make use of the Chanukah light, we do so from the shamash, and not from the eight Chanukah flames. "...These [eight Chanukah] flames are kodesh (holy). We are not permitted to make use of them, only to gaze at them" (Chanukah liturgy).

The Hebrew word "kodesh" literally means separate and beyond. In Judaism, although we can appreciate holy objects and observances on many levels, they are essentially higher than our finite understanding and perception, since they are rooted in the Infinite. It was this "holiness" that the Greeks failed to destroy. And it is this holiness that is manifested in the lights of Chanukah.



Mattisyahu the Kohen, and his five sons, began to challenge the Greek strongholds with a group of followers called the Maccabees. Historical sources estimate their numbers at 6,000, while Antiochus IV sent 40,000 troops to overwhelm them. Yehudis, a young widow, used cunning tactics to assassinate Holofernes, a vicious Seleucid general. After significant losses in the cities of Shechem and Beit Choron, Antiochus IV sent an additional 65,000 troops. The Maccabees fought bitter, yet intelligent, battles that are studied by military tacticians to this very day. After three years and thousands of lives, Israel was finally free.

On Chanukah, we celebrate two miracles: the victory of the Maccabees over the forces of Antiochus IV in the battlefield, and the miracle of the oil, which burned for eight days. The victory in the battlefield was miraculous, but it was physical, limited by time and space. The miracle of the oil, which enabled the Jewish people to resume the service in the holy Temple, was spiritual. Jews around the world emulate this miracle and spirituality today by observing Chanukah.

The Chanukah struggle is found within each of us. Chassidic teachings explain that we have two souls. One soul is drawn to the spiritual, the other to the physical. We may reconcile this duality by being involved with the material world, but toward a spiritual end. This is one

reason why there are so many mitzvot in the Torah, all of them involving physical action. When the physical is engaged for spiritual purposes, the conflict is transformed into peace and harmony. A world of peace begins with inner peace. When one makes peace within, it has an effect on his or her home, environment and eventually the entire world.



The name "Chanukah" is rooted in several different, yet related, sources. It comes from "kah," the Hebrew equivalent of 25, and "chanu," meaning rest. It is also connected with the words "inauguration" (chanukat) and "education" (chinuch).

On the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, the Maccabees rested from their battle. They marched victoriously into the holy Temple in Jerusalem, ready to reinaugurate the holy service. They would forever serve as role models, or educators, to future generations.

What does a soul look like? Look at the flame of a candle. A flame is bright, jumping, never resting; the natural desire of a soul is to "jump up" to G-d, to break free of physical limitations. The wick and candle anchor a flame; a physical body grounds the soul, forcing the soul to do its job, to give light and warmth.

The human body, precious and holy, is likened to the holy Temple. The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism, always advised against asceticism, fasts and hurting the body. Better, he would say, to use your body to perform a deed of kindness.

Kindness is contagious. When our soul tells our body to do a kind deed, both the soul and body are affected. Eventually, other souls around us awaken and influence their bodies to do the same. Before long, we create an international epidemic of kindness. This is one reason why the Chanukah menorah is placed where it can be seen from the street, either in the doorway across from the mezuzah or near a window, reminding us of our duty to share the spiritual light of warmth and wisdom with our surroundings.

NIGHT



Victory turned bittersweet when the Maccabees found that the Temple was desecrated and the pure oil needed to light the menorah was defiled. Miraculously, the Maccabees discovered a single jar of pure oil, with the seal of the Kohen Gadol (Jewish high priest) intact. With this oil, the holy Temple was reinaugurated.

Why didn't the Seleucids just destroy the oil, as opposed to defiling it? Oil is a symbol for holiness. It can permeate anything, yet when placed in water, it rises to the top. Defiled, not destroyed, oil is exactly what Antiochus IV wanted. He allowed the Jews to adhere to their culture and keep their laws, as long as it was "touched" by the Greek ideals and philosophy.

Chassidic teachings explain that despite any entity that tries to sever our connection to G-dliness, the essence of a soul can never be defiled. This spark of holiness continuously burns and longs to be fanned into a great flame. The universe was created to perpetuate light, and it is inherently good (Genesis). But there are times when darkness invades G-d's world. At such times, we search for the hidden "single jar of pure oil" (Chanukah liturgy), the pure and indestructible spark of Creation, which radiates goodness and holiness.

NIGHT



The Maccabees had done all that was physically possible, but the small jar of oil was only enough to light the candles of the menorah for one day. To prepare more oil would require a process of at least seven days. After defeating the world's most powerful army and gaining religious freedom for generations to come, the Maccabees were not about to give up. They lit the

menorah with the little oil they found, and miraculously, the menorah shone for eight days, plus 2000 years, as Chanukah continues to illuminate our home and world today.

However miraculous their victory, some would attribute the Maccabean military success to their superior strategy. The last night of the holiday is called Zot Chanukah, "This is Chanukah." Our Sages explain that "zot" refers to something when it is revealed and tangible, "when it can be pointed to with a finger." When the Jewish people witnessed a scientific impossibility, the miracle of the oil, there was no denying G-d's Presence.

Why does G-d perform miracles? Without miracles, such as the oil found in the holy Temple, one might believe that the laws of physics define reality. However, once

we see the inexplicable, we witness a transcendent reality and attain a higher consciousness. We can then look back at physics, point with our finger and realize, "This too is a miracle."

The Baal Shem Tov said, "The difference between nature and a miracle is the frequency."

The Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, teaches that the ultimate miracle is not the splitting of the sea, manna from heaven, or the sun standing still. It is described as the subtle and, at the same time, dramatic transformation of the universe that will occur with the arrival of Moshiach. At that time, nature itself will uncover its miraculous essence. What is now perceived as a wall between the physical and spiritual will be revealed as a bridge. How can we bring about this miracle? With the light of our collective mitzvot.



ALUMNI

SPOTLIGHT



Josh November '01

HASIDIC POET HAS GOT THE WRITE STUFF

Alan Zeitlin '00

Standing atop a rickety ladder, Josh November asked the most important question that a man can ever ask. Optimistic about the answer he would get from his girlfriend, when she opened her second story window, the Binghamton University senior began with a poem called “Sweet Bride.” The poem is one of many that appear in “God’s Optimism,” November’s debut book of poetry.

The 31-year-old, who teaches writing at Rutgers University and Touro College, said that after his roommate proposed by putting a ring inside a tennis ball, the scribe had to swing something Shakespearean.

“I knew I couldn’t do something lame,” said November, who graduated in 2001. “I was scared that I could fall but I didn’t think I had a choice.”

November had a more difficult choice when it came to his career path. After leaving Binghamton he immersed himself in Jewish learning. He grew a beard and began to live the Hasidic lifestyle.

The father of four children recalled a seminal moment when he realized he was on the right path in life. While pursuing his MFA in creative writing at the University of Pittsburgh, his professor brought him to meet a widely respected Jewish poet. November expected to get invaluable advice. But then, the unexpected happened.

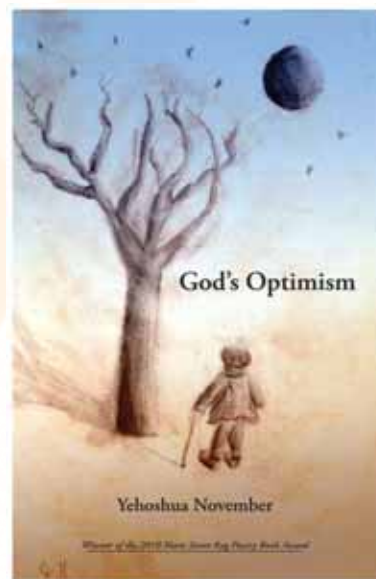
“He asked about my beard and I tried to explain the kabalistic significance,” November said. “He responded, ‘Everybody knows kabala is B.S.’ When I told him who my teachers were, he said “some of them used

to be good writers.”

November said he remembers the disappointing bus-ride following the encounter and he thought about how unhappy the poet seemed. But when he got off the bus, that image was replaced by one of a mashgiach standing

over a tremendous vat of boiling water, as he was kashering silverware.

“My co-worker looked up at me with his foggy glasses, and greeted me warmly,” November said. “He worked many hours and didn’t have an easy life. Even when things went wrong, he maintained a positive attitude. Though this was only a passing mo-



ment, the contrast between the two men was clear. Not to say that all rabbis are outstanding and all poets are self-centered, but that was a moment that re-affirmed where I should head in life. And still left the question of what I should do for a living.”

As he built his family with his wife, Amy, the passion for writing poetry and teaching was there, but some rabbis implied that poetry and Judaism were mutually exclusive. But those who he felt understood the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe encouraged him, telling him this is the very thing the Rebbe would want. When the decision came to pursue rabbinic ordination or teach English and be a

Alan Zeitlin '00 teaches English and Journalism at a Brooklyn public high school. As a freelance writer for the past 10 years, his articles have appeared in The Jewish Week, The Journal News and other publications.

writer, November said Rabbi Aaron Slonim encouraged him to be a teacher, reasoning that he might use his gift to have an impact he might not otherwise have as a rabbi.

"I was a little surprised," November said. "I don't know how many rabbis would have said that. I started to think that maybe it was my purpose in life to reach people as a professor and a poet."

November said he still remembers how when at Binghamton he would see Slonim in the student union, the rabbi would ask him how his day was and inquire about things that didn't have to do with religion. He even remembered to ask about his test from the previous week.

"The fact that he cared about me as a person was inspiring," November said. "Before that I had met a lot of religious Jews who only cared about accumulating points to get to the next world like it was a video game or something. I didn't feel liked they cared about who I really was. Giving a person a pair of tsitsis is not the only way to help them. I think it's important for people to understand that you can be Hasidic and be a regular person and not be out of touch with peoples' emotions and need for humor."

Concerning his recent experiences as a professor, November shared some humorous moments. One student at Rutgers saw his beard and black hat on the first day of the semester and muttered that she must be in the wrong class. She left, only to return moments later. A student on the Rutgers University football team asked November if he knew Matisyahu. And he's been on elevators with former Binghamton students who don't recognize him because of his beard.

"Sometimes, I forget I look this way until I look in the mirror," he said.

Many of November's poems are reflections about his true love and his time at Binghamton. The Pittsburgh native has been nominated for an L.A Times Book prize and his poem about the funeral of the beloved BU Yiddish professor Jack Weinstein (see inset) has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

"My dream was to be a poet," November said. "I think to inspire others, raise a Jewish family and teach, is the greatest way for me to serve G-d." 🌟

Upstairs the Eulogy, Downstairs the Rummage Sale

The beloved Yiddish professor
passed away on the same day
as the synagogue's rummage sale,

and because they could not bear
the coffin up the many steps
that led to the sanctuary,
they left it in the hallway downstairs,

and because I was not one of his students,
and it didn't matter if I heard the eulogy,
they told me to stay downstairs,
to watch over the body and recite Psalms.

And I thought,
this is how it is in the life and death of a righteous man:
upstairs, in the sanctuary, they speak of you in glowing terms,
while down below your body rests beside
old kitchen appliances.

And I recited the Psalms as intently
as I could over a man I had only met once,
and because I knew where he was headed,
and you and I were to wed in a few months,
I asked that he bring with him a prayer for a good marriage.

And this is how it is in the life and death of a righteous man:
strangers pray over the sum of your days,
and strangers ask you to haul their heavy requests
where you cannot even take your body.

— Josh November

MAZEL TOVS

- '89 Edan Saltz and Maria Lopotkhin** announce the birth of their son Gabriel Román on November 6, 2010. He was welcomed home by big brother Ariel Jacob.
- '91 Marc and Heather Benjamin** announce the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Jared Edward (Yisrael Chaim Yitzchak), on Shabbos Parshas Bereishis (October 2, 2010).
- '96 Noah and Malka Hochstadt** announce the birth of their daughter, Sara Avigayil on Sept. 28, 2010. She was welcomed home by siblings Kovi, Shoshana and Aliza.
- Robyn (Friedman) and Adam Cohen** announce the birth of Hannah Dalia, Channah Dalia, on Oct. 12th, 2010. She was welcomed home by big brothers Billy, Danny and Noah.
- '97 Avraham and Yutti Polinger** announce the birth of their daughter, Shaina Nomi, on Elul 21, 5770. She was welcomed home by Chanah, Leah, Baila and Chaya Mushka.
- Shoshana (Schwartz) and Hillel Isserof** announce the birth of their daughter, Chaya Sara, on Oct 13, 2010, 5 Cheshvan 5771. She was welcomed home by big siblings Doniel Simcha, Elazar Menachem, Moshe and Tehilla Faige.
- '99 Levi and Jessica Dulitz** announce the birth of their son, Mason Max, on Sept. 1, 2010. He was welcomed home by big sister Ella.
- '00 Ben Benzel** announces his engagement to Deborah Krisbergh. Ben is a trader for Trillium Trading, LLC; Deborah does institutional Marketing for Cohen & Steers. A May 2011 wedding is planned.
- Ari and Danielle Mark** announce the birth of their daughter, Ayla Ruby, on April 22, 2010.
- '01 Judith Glaser** announces her engagement to Simon Firestone. Dr. Glaser is a physiatrist (Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) at National Rehabilitation Hospital. Dr. Firestone is an economist and works at the Federal Reserve. A Spring 2011 wedding is planned. They will make their home in the Washington, DC area.
- '02 Brad Friess** announces his marriage to Brooke Berenson on May 30, 2010 in Mexico. Brad is currently the Director of Tour Marketing/Artist Manager in the music business in NYC and Brooke is a teacher for the NYC School District.
- Rabiel Amirian** and Natalie Maroof were married on October 10, 2010. Rabiel practices dentistry and Natalie is a jewelry designer. They make their home in NYC.
- '03 Adam Verstandig** announces his engagement to Debra Turetsky; a March 27, 2011 wedding is planned. Adam is an attorney with Jones Day; Debra is an attorney with Reed Smith LLP. They will make their home in NYC.
- Adam Perry ('08 MA)** announces his engagement to Avigayil Simkovitz; a January 9, 2011 wedding is planned. Adam is currently completing his Ph.D. in mathematics at Binghamton University; Avigayil is teaching Elementary school while completing her Masters in special education. They will make their home, initially, in Binghamton, NY.
- '04 Shalhevet Deutsch** announces her marriage to Ido Kuta on December 26, 2010. They will make their home in Israel.

Denise (Cohen) and David Kronfeld announce the birth of their daughter, Mia Chana, on October 2, 2010.

- '05 Neil Hakimi and Diana Nadri** were married on October 24, 2010. Neil is a first year medical resident; Diana is a sales assistant for a wholesale fashion company. They live in Norwalk, CT.
- '06 Sarit Wishnevski and Ari Fuchs** were married on October 17, 2010; they make their home in NYC. Sarit is working at DOROT and is going to NYU Wagner for a Masters of Public Administration with a focus on Non-Profit Management; Ari is working at an internet startup: Aviary.com.
- Kevin Kashani** announces his engagement to Alissa Estreicher.
- '07 Ari Fuchs and Sarit Wishnevski** were married on October 17, 2010. See '06 for details.
- Ayelet Walker** announces her engagement to Ephraim Weiss; a March 27, 2011 wedding is planned. Ayelet is completing her MS in Music Therapy at Molloy College; Ephraim is completing his fourth year of medical school at Drexel University.
- Ramian Melamed** announces his engagement to Natalie Fardian; a February 3, 2011 wedding is planned. They will make their home in Jerusalem, Israel.
- '08 David Schneid** announces his engagement to Irina Igonnikov; an early 2012 wedding is planned. David is a financial analyst at BlackRock and Irina works as a Project Architect at an international architecture studio in Soho. They will make their home in NYC.

CONDOLENCES

Chabad mourns the untimely death of **Steven Mayer, Shlomo ben Mordechai**, father of Stuart '00, Richie '03 and Debbie Klinger '05, on October 16, 2010.

May the family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.




מוהל מומחה
Rabbi Moshe Klein
Expert Mohel

Comes highly recommended by Rabbi, Rivky and all of the Slonim boys!

718-773-2626 • 718-221-2222

Alumni, parents, friends:

A dedication in Hakesher is a perfect way to mark a birth, bar mitzvah, engagement, wedding, Yahrtzeit or any other special event, while assisting us in bringing you this magazine.

Dedications will appear on page 2.

For information please visit

www.JewishBU.com/Hakesher

Kaddish with Oprah

Simcha Jacobovici

The phone rang in my New York hotel room. It was 1995, and I was saying Kaddish for my late father, of blessed memory, Joseph Jacobovici. I live in Toronto, but I'm a filmmaker, so I move around.

During my eleven months of saying Kaddish, I ended up in various minyans from San Francisco to Halifax. Once I extended a stopover in Detroit and rushed to the basement of an old shul, where I was greeted by nine octogenarians as if I were the Messiah himself. But the phone call in New York was the start of what turned out to be perhaps the most interesting Kaddish experience of them all.

I had just finished a documentary film called "The Selling of Innocents." The film won an Emmy, attracting the attention of Oprah Winfrey, the American icon and celebrated TV host. The producer at the other end of the telephone line asked if I could fly to Chicago and appear with my fellow producers on the Oprah show the day after next. I was taken aback. This was the Oprah show. The big time. Great publicity for the film, and great promotion for me and my company. "I'd love to do it," I said, "but

I don't think I can." "Why not?" the producer asked, her voice betraying her surprise. Nobody says "too busy" to the Oprah show.

"I have a problem," I answered.

The producer's voice, Lisa was her name, became steely. All business. "What's the problem?" she asked.

"It's complicated."

"Try me," she said.

I began the process of explaining to a non-Jewish television producer from Chicago about the Jewish ritual of Kaddish. Whenever I had to explain this, [people] never quite got it. I would tell them that I need a minyan, and they would drive me to an empty shul... It never quite worked out. But this was Oprah. So I gave it a try.

"I'm Jewish. My father passed away. In our religion it's incumbent on me, three times a day, to say a certain prayer, a glorification of G-d's Name, really. It's called Mourner's Kaddish. To do this, I need to be in a 'Jewish quorum.' It's called a minyan... So I can't miss this ritual. If I come to Chicago, I would have to attend morning services prior to being on Oprah."

"No problem," she said. "You need a minyan to say

Kaddish. Ten Jewish men. For morning services. I'll arrange it."

"It's not so simple," I said.

"You may find a synagogue, but it might not have a minyan in the morning. Or the Jewish community may send you to a synagogue that's not open... which wouldn't do the trick for me."

Lisa tried to be patient. "I'll fax the flight information to your hotel. You will be met in Chicago by a limo. The driver will have the minyan information. You will say Kaddish for your father."

The rest unfolded like a military operation. The next day the ticket came. Then the limo came. The driver took me to a hotel and said, "I'll be here at 6:30 a.m. Your minyan begins at 7 a.m. I'll pick you up at 8 a.m. You'll be at the Oprah show by 8:30 a.m."

The hotel room was beautiful. I slept like a baby. At 6:30 in the morning, I came down and stepped into my limo. There was a newspaper on the seat. I could get used to this, I thought.

The driver pulled up in front of a downtown office building and told me that there was a Chabad Lubavitch minyan on one of the upper floors. When I got there, the rabbi looked at me and said, "So you're the

guy saying Kaddish. I was warned by the Oprah show that I'd better have a minyan."

We smiled at each other. I was really impressed with Lisa and Oprah. And I felt that my father was surely amused. After davening, my driver took me to the Oprah show. I was met by Lisa, a black woman in her thirties. She got straight to the point.

"You had a minyan?"

"Yes, thank you," I said.

"Was it proper? Did you say Kaddish?"

"Absolutely. Couldn't be better," I answered.

She looked at me with that look that star surgeons have when they come out of the operating room. Or maybe it's the look that battle commanders have when coming back from a military operation. It's a look that says, "Nothing is too complicated."

I was on Oprah. She was very professional. I had my five minutes of fame. But all I can remember of that day is the Kaddish.

Simcha Jacobovici is an award winning film director, producer, free-lance journalist, and writer.

Article excerpted from *Living Kaddish* edited by Rabbi Gedalia Zweig (Targum Press).



Professor Liz Rosenberg

A WRITING TEACHER WHOM STUDENTS BELIEVE IN

Alan Zeitlin



Writers are usually thrilled to see their first words in print. But Liz Rosenberg had a different reaction when her first poem was published in *Seventeen Magazine*.

"My emotional reaction was embarrassment—it was a terrible poem," she said. But after that, Rosenberg would have little to be embarrassed about. She's published more than 15 books, including *"The Fire Music"* and the award winning *"Light-Gathering."*

In her tenure as a creative writing teacher at Binghamton University, Rosenberg amassed a cadre of successful students as she garnered a reputation for helping turn student writers into published authors. She said she is proud to see many of her students go on to publish novels, screenplays, short stories and books of poetry.

But can creativity be taught and what kind of teaching philosophy does Rosenberg employ?

"I think the best teacher can save young writers some times," she said. "Your experience as a writer may help them find their way a little faster; teach them one or two tricks that work, get them on a path of a good working rou-

time, avoid pitfalls that might otherwise take years. The best teachers really step out of the best student's way and let them run. I love my students, and I think that helps, too. It always helps if someone believes in you early on.

Rosenberg, who won the University of Excellence in Teaching Award in 1983, also writes book reviews for *The Boston Globe*. Rosenberg, who most recently authored *"The Lily Poems"* and *"Demon Love,"* said the love that the Slonims have for the students at Binghamton University is inspiring.

"They are so incredible in how hard they work to provide education and programs for the students," she said. "What's really remarkable is that they make their home basically available to students 24/7 and their doors are always open if someone has a question. I think that shows a great commitment."

Rosenberg cited Josh November, (profiled in this issue) as one of her best students, who made an immediate impact by saying that he wanted to restore the "sanctity of language." She added that his debut work showed great skill.

As for the future of publishing and books, Rosenberg admitted that there are certain things that are in doubt.

"I sometimes fear the future of books and libraries," she said. "I doubt an e book can ever fully replace the total experience of holding a book in your hands, the book as object, with its own distinct smell and texture, the pleasure of turning pages. I worry that we waste our eyes and time on too many screens. But I believe in books. It may be an old fashioned belief."

Rosenberg, who earned her master's degree in creative writing from John Hopkins University and has taught at Binghamton for more than 30 years, said she is encouraged that poetry is gaining respect among the youth of the country. She continues to be impressed by students at Binghamton University, who haven't lost their passion.

"I love BU," she said. "I love the hunger and drive of our students." 📖

Alan Zeitlin '00 teaches English and Journalism at a Brooklyn public high school. As a freelance writer for the past 10 years, his articles have appeared in *The Jewish Week*, *The Journal News* and other publications.

Celebration 25!

Almost 600 “members of the family” gathered to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Chabad of Binghamton at a Gala Dinner held on October 17, 2010 at Gotham Hall in NYC.

The five Guests of Honor,
each representing a five-year period, were
Lori '87 and Marc '87 Ben Ezra,
Steven Katz '91,
Naomi '97 and Ari '95 Rosenfeld,
Stacy '01 and Stuart '00 Mayer,
and Meeka '05 and David '05 Natanov.



A GALA WITH CHUTZPAH

Alan Zeitlin

It takes a lot of chutzpah to score a touchdown. You need the speed to get by the defense. You have to trust your blockers, who try to open a path for you. You have to have the power and resilience to take a hit and keep on going. You also have to listen in the huddle, come up with a good plan and execute it, even if things go wrong. You have to ignore the voice inside your head that tells you drop to the ground and give up, because you're not going to make it and if you keep trying, you'll get hurt.

So it is no surprise that when people do manage to score a touchdown, they hoot, holler and dance in a taunting fashion to show their physical prowess. This is what we usually see on TV on Sundays. But I remember a great phrase from a TV show where a coach gave an invaluable piece of advice to his player. "When you score a touchdown, you don't need to showboat," he said. "Act like you've been there before."

At the recent gathering at Gotham Hall in Manhattan, the gala marking the 25th anniversary of Chabad of Binghamton drew more than 550 people. The venue was stunning and the food was great. There were huge television screens that showed the speeches of the honorees. There were friends who hugged and shared stories from days of old. But so what? That's what happens at reunions so what's the big deal? If I wouldn't have come, would I really have missed anything? I thought of some of the grandiose weddings I had attended, especially one where I watched a man stuff his face with chocolate soufflé. I wondered if this person would ever call the bride and groom and ever even visit them. Would he offer to baby-sit their children? Years later, would he remember anything but the

chocolate soufflé?

At the gala, I stared at the plate of food in front of me and (no offense to the caterer) wished I just had a giant plate of Rivky's potato salad. I stink at Math, but estimate that I consumed about 400 pounds of potatoes at Chabad dinners. Then I thought not only about the cost of the meals, but the time it took to prepare them.

At the same time, I listened to the speeches of honorees and their video presentations. They were not the usual, "Thank you to Chabad you are awesome," speeches. They had detail, they had punch, heart and they resonated with people who had never even met them before. That is because Chabad of Binghamton had a plan to build a community before they had a new plan to build a new building.

People like to say that all events are special. I think every event must stand against the rotation of monotony and apathy we are stuck in between. The gala was an event that left a mark on me because I got something out of it.



Alan Zeitlin celebrates with his brother Gary '96 at the Gala dinner

What I will remember is the feeling of pride to be a part of a community where people do not allow themselves to become overcome by negative voices that tell them their goals are too lofty or their dreams are unattainable. There was a palpable sense of people acting like they had been there before, despite the tremendous achievements of the

What I will remember is the feeling of pride to be a part of a community where people do not allow themselves to become overcome by negative voices that tell them their goals are too lofty or their dreams are unattainable

physical enhancement of facilities as well as the spiritual enhancement of the thousands who have walked through their doors.

The "if you build it, they will come," mantra that I remember from the Fox show "Married With Children," isn't always true in real life. Building something physical doesn't always make people show up. You have to build something on an emotional level.

I had tears in my eyes at the dinner when

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

Alan Zeitlin '00 teaches English and Journalism at a Brooklyn public high school. As a freelance writer for the past 10 years, his articles have appeared in The Jewish Week, The Journal News and other publications.



The Chabad student Executive Board with Rabbis Zalman Cheln and Levi Slonim (l) and Rebbetzins Hadasa Slonim and Rochel Cheln (r) after each board member received their Lamplighter Award.

In parashas Vayera we read the story of Sara and Avrohom and how together, they transformed the world then, and for eternity. In simple terms they set up the world's first Chabad center; a tent in the dessert open on



Mr. Goerge Rohr

four sides, accessible to passersby in need of nurture and nourishment. They fed them, they gave them to drink and they taught them to bless G-d, the source of all. They shared with them the profound truth of Judaism: that there is no divide between the physical and the spiritual.

This is what Chabad of Binghamton has done for the last 25 years. Like the *shluchim* before them and those after them, acting on the Rebbe's teachings of "Uforatzta", you must spread forth, Aaron and Rivky Slonim left the place of their birth to take on this *shlichus*. Undeterred, by the many challenges, they set up their tent at Binghamton University and created an environment that drew students from many more than four directions. They provided for them a warm and safe haven, an opportunity to grow, to question and to take charge of their future and destiny.

A quarter of a century later, in my travels, and in numerous conversations I see and hear of the results.

The greatest testimony to the work of Chabad in Binghamton is found not primarily in the huge number of students they attract, or the state of the art facility they have built, or the fact that they are—despite the size of their program—still focused on the individual needs of each student, or their innovative programming that is replicated on campuses around the world – they are the innovators of the Shabbat 1000 program—, or the life changing lessons learned there, not even in the thousands of alumni all of whom speak of Chabad at Binghamton as their home away from home. It is in the homes and families established, in the organizations, synagogues and various programs inspired and led by Chabad of Binghamton alumni across the country and around the world... Wherever I travel—and I travel extensively—I meet the members of the household of this great and vast tent.

— From the message of Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky,
Vice President of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch
delivered by Mr. George Rohr,
Chairman of Chabad on Campus International Foundation

IN THE WORDS OF OUR HONOREES

Let's put Chabad of Binghamton into a context that most of us can understand—it's a business. As somebody who has grown his own business, one of my main concerns is having enough capital available to fund the growth. This concern is only magnified in the not for profit world.

We are all in this room because we know the work that Chabad performs is top notch. Each week hundreds of students participate in meals, classes and other programs. Each year thousands of students are changed. If the product wasn't good people wouldn't be buying.

What Chabad offers is genuine. A genuine and incredible love for and understanding of people. A genuine love for Judaism and a genuine home away from home that students can turn to and find leadership and guidance.

However, non-profit doesn't mean no expenses. If fact, quite the contrary. How much do you think it costs to build a first class 30,000 square foot building? How much do you think it costs to serve about 700 meals per week? How much does it cost to present interesting classes, speakers and activities? In order to continue their work, Chabad of Binghamton counts on all of us for financial support.

When we make decisions about the allocation of our philanthropic dollars, we consider the goals of the organization and its success in reaching these goals. Each Jewish student who passes through Chabad House is significantly impacted. Each community they return to is further impacted.



There is no doubt that the work of Chabad is multiplied after students graduate and continue to nurture

their Jewish heritage within their own families and communities. It's plain and simple, an investment in Chabad of Binghamton is an investment in the future generations of Jews, in better citizenship and in our communities. Tonight, Chabad is forefront in everybody's minds. However, when each of us goes back to our own homes, the Slonims return to Binghamton to continue their work. — To continue what is all of our work.

In our business we can't do it all so we look to hire the very best people to help us get the job done. Its *all* of our business to build a better Jewish future. We're fortunate that we can turn to the Chabad Jewish Student Center to help us get that job done!

It's true that we each have our own schools and synagogues to support, but it's equally important not to forget the impact that Chabad has had on each of us and continues to have on the students at Binghamton University and on the future. So, please, join us in making Chabad of Binghamton an institution that you support every year, not just every 25 years.

— Marc '87 and Lori '87 Ben-Ezra



Mr. Barry Newman

Chabad of Binghamton and I go back about 20 years and it's always been about construction. From the very first time when Phil Piaker (obm) brought me over to Chabad on a Friday night hoping that I would help them build a "fire door" and I saw how the students were crammed in there like sardines, I knew what they needed was a building, not a door! At the town hearing on the subject of our first building, some people in the

neighborhood expressed their concern about too much noise, too many students and so on. In contrast, Chabad's next door neighbor, Mr. Pomerantz, the person most likely to be affected, told the town "I live next door. I know who goes there and how they behave. The United States needs more places like the Chabad Jewish Student Center, not less. Give them their building permit." And ever since then it's been expansion after expansion because we need a place where Jewish youth can find community, family and inspiration. Thank you to everyone who has helped make this a reality.

— Mr. Barry Newman, President of Chabad's board of Trustees

The relationship between Binghamton University and Chabad of Binghamton is a complimentary one. The University has many identities and people of all faiths call it alma mater. That said, one of the strongest identities Binghamton University has is as a public University that combines academic excellence and a robust Jewish life. Chabad of Binghamton is our partner in creating and maintaining that identity. Even more importantly Chabad of Binghamton is our partner in providing a truly holistic educational experience to Binghamton students. Chabad aims for each student that comes through its doors to be not only a better Jew, but a better person. The essence of a Binghamton education is that we want each student to become not only a better chemist, economist, engineer, or musician, but also a better person.



Vice President Brian Rose

I thank Chabad of Binghamton—and all of you who have helped them—for contributing so much to the education of so many of our graduates. Together, we have done truly great work.

— Brian T. Rose,
Vice President for Student Affairs, Binghamton University



Jon Cogan

Student President of Chabad at Binghamton.

I initially attended Chabad as a spectator; although I was physically present, I didn't allow myself to become an active participant.

This quickly changed when I was asked by a fellow student to assist with the preparations for Jazzukah, our annual music and BBQ extravaganza in the Sukkah. Looking back, I realize that this experience was the defining moment that ultimately resulted in my direct involvement and active participation in Chabad.

My personal experience serves as a reminder of the importance of encouraging students to engage in the many opportunities present at our Chabad Center. Through my leadership role, Chabad has empowered me with the ability to impact the lives of other individuals. There is one personal example that stands out in my memory. As a newly elected executive board member, I felt that it was my duty to reach out to new students and welcome them to Chabad. One Sukkot evening my sophomore year, I became friendly with a new group of freshman students that later introduced me to one of their friends. During this time, I happened to be recruiting students to participate in our Bar and Bat Mitzvah event. I offered this girl the opportunity for Chabad to provide her with the Bat-mitzvah celebration she never had. Today, she credits her participation in this event as having helped her find her Jewish identity. She later traveled to Israel for a summer of learning and joined our leadership as an executive board member.

This experience communicated the power of leadership and our ability as leaders to impact the lives of those surrounding us. I learned from my experience that taking the additional step and reaching out to one extra individual can change another person's world.

As the student leaders of Jewish life at Binghamton, we are constantly reminded of the story of the lamplighter.

The Rebbe once defined a chassid — a pious person — as a lamp lighter. The lamp lighter was responsible for lighting the street-lamps throughout the town. Although the lamp lighter frequently encountered lamps that were not easily accessible, he worked diligently to light those lamps, so that they could fulfill their purpose and light up the paths of others.

— Jon Cogan, Student President

IN THE WORDS OF OUR HONOREES



I was having lunch with my friend Jim last week and we were talking about G-d. He said to me, "Steve, I'm a single guy, I own my house, I have a great job, I can basically do whatever I want.....If I didn't have G-d in my life, if I wasn't accountable to a higher power, think about the amount of trouble I could get myself into!"

Now, Jim has been sober for 27 years, after living on the street as a homeless alcoholic. He goes to AA meetings every week, takes the homeless into his home, and has served as a sponsor for hundreds of alcoholics and addicts over the years. He has an unshakable faith in G-d. But what he says about the impact, the difference that G-d has made in his life, struck right to the core of my belief system.

I agree with Jim. A life with no accountability, with no G-d, is a life without purpose. When there is no G-d in our life, we end up spending our time filling up life with the insatiable desires of "me", satisfying "me", and serving the altar of "me". And there is already enough of this happening in the world right now. You can almost feel it in the air... the palpable sense of lack of purpose and lack of accountability in our society. You can watch people filling up on material things, but still remaining empty. Because serving yourself, as I have learned from Chabad, will never be as fulfilling as serving your G-dly purpose.

Being on a college campus is about reaching young adults at the most critical time in their lives. This is why it is so important to support Chabad of Binghamton. They have taken on the critical and overwhelming responsibility to be there for our Jewish youth, with endless love, and to help direct them so they can live fulfilling Jewish lives with the true happiness that comes from knowing that your place in the world matters. That we all have a purpose and a place in G-d's world.

— Steven Katz '91

Chabad of Binghamton will always remain a particularly special place for us, as we can trace our first meeting back to a very cold night out in their sukkah.

Those of you who personally experienced and benefited from the work of Chabad of Binghamton, as we did, remember the warmth and sense of belonging that is fostered there, as well as the rich and meaningful Jewish experience that is offered to all those who walk through their doors.

— Ari Rosenfeld '95

I would compare life in Binghamton to living in a large, Jewish, Walmart where the absolute best selection of Jewish life is offered, at all times, right at your finger tips. Thankfully, Ari and I had the good sense to take advantage while we were there.

I would like to share just one example of the powerful effect Chabad had on both my Jewish home life as well as my broader Jewish communal involvement. During a trip to Israel with Rivky during my sophomore year, we were on top of Masada and Rivky pointed out the remains of the oldest Mikvah found in the world. She explained about the importance of Mikvah, as evidenced by the fact that the Jews living besieged by the Romans with very little supplies, felt it necessary to build a Mikvah according

to the exact halachic specifications and to keep this mitzvah under very difficult conditions. Suffice it to say, I was inspired. I am not only committed to keeping this mitzvah myself, but I have made it

a priority in terms of my service in my community where I serve as treasurer of our Mikvah. In this way, I hope that I am able to transmit that incredible experience that I had on top of Masada to countless others.

...Chabad is not only an organization reaching out to students on Binghamton's campus; it is ensuring the continuity of the Jewish people in a much broader and far reaching sense.

— Naomi Rosenfeld '97



Dayna Driscoll

Two years ago, as an incoming freshman I never would have imagined that someone like me would be involved in Chabad. I had no Yeshiva education, did not keep kosher and I definitely did NOT do a gap year in Israel. I attended Hebrew school for the sole purpose of learning for my Bat-Mitzvah but did not have the opportunity to learn about Jewish law, Jewish thought or history. I knew where I came from but did not really know what it meant to BE a Jew. I didn't truly gain this understanding until recently when I had the privilege to go to Israel on Birthright with Chabad and I davened at the Kotel on Shabbat. Everything finally made sense. Through Chabad I have not just grown as a person but as a Jew, a Jewish woman who finally has a Jewish identity she is proud of.

Before college, I only vaguely knew of Chabad and the only notion I DID have was that it was more "religious" than my own Jewish upbringing. Then one freezing night in January I was brought to Chabad by new friends, which I remember as if it was yesterday. This was the true beginning of college for me. That night changed my ENTIRE college experience. One person brought ME to Chabad at Binghamton, and has enabled me to do exactly the same for others. As a student leader I am one of the people underclassmen look up to. What I want them most to understand is that they too have the ability to change the lives of Jewish students just like myself who came one snowy night with no expectations. Being a leader at Chabad is about friendship. Empowerment is about more than programming, it's about saying that Shabbat Shalom to a quiet new Freshman because I know that's exactly what changed me.

— Dayna Driscoll, Student Vice President





You are all here tonight because your lives have been influenced by Chabad in some way. The Chabad that we were influenced by was one of dynamic growth and progress. At its core though, Chabad remained a personal and warm home away from home and represented the one constant in our lives during our college years of continuous change. Because of events like this and supporters like you, college students of today and tomorrow will have the same and more opportunities for leadership, education, and friendship forging a path toward a brighter Jewish future. We share this honor with everyone here; as tonight we have become partners in the holy work of Chabad of Binghamton.

As new parents, we feel an increased sense of responsibility to continue the teachings and traditions of our heritage. We take comfort in knowing that the lessons we learned from Chabad will remain with us forever. May Chabad move forward from strength to strength with the same wide-eyed enthusiasm they first came to Binghamton with 25 years ago under the blessing of the Rebbe.

— Meeka '05 and David '05 Natanov



Guests of Honor Stacy '01 and Stuart '00 Mayer were prevented from attending the dinner due to the news of the untimely death of Stu's father which came a day before the dinner. The presentation to Stu and Stacy consisted of all the dinner guest studying a mishne in merit of Mr. Steven Mayer as well as the original art presented to all of the other honorees. Beverly and Toby Bernstein, aunt and uncle of Stacy Mayer joined Rabbi and Rivky Slonim at the podium to study the mishne and accept the gift on behalf of Stacy and Stuart.

MITZVOS ON THE SPOT FOR PEOPLE ON THE GO



The Holiday season at BU was a time of joy, fervor and connection. Inspiring **Yom Kippur** services were followed by a **break the fast**, and Sukkot was a non stop festival of rousing services, huge meals in the Sukkah, opportunities to **bless over the four kinds**, joyous dancing and **Onegs in the Sukkah**. Then came the annual, incredible **JAZZUKAHFEST** featuring music by alum **David Ross '01** followed by the Simchat Torah celebration that Chabad is famous for, and the unparalleled display of Jewish pride at the **Simchat Torah Blast** — despite the torrential downpour!



JAZZUKAHFEST 2010 ROCKED



CHABAD DOWNTOWN



GRILLIN AND CHILLIN

Rappin
TEFILLIN
at Mendel's
Upsheren



CHALLAH BAKING WITH AEPHI



Chabad's annual mega **BLOOD DRIVE** held to commemorate victims of 9/11 is the largest blood drive on BU campus. This year the blood drive was held in conjunction with **Phi Di Fraternity**.



The brothers of **SAE** get a **MEZUZAH** on their door.

Chabad now has a Mezuzah bank. Contact us if you need a Mezuzah for your door — *don't leave home without one!*

For a full gallery of pictures of these events and others please visit:
www.JewishBU.com



INTERGREEK BBQ



THE WOMEN'S LEAGUE



The Women's League for Chabad annual Salute to Jewish Womanhood featured a talk by **MRS. ESTHER STERNBERG** and a performance by **ARIELLA GOLDBERG**. A delightful time was had by all.



FALL 2010 JLI COURSE

Over fifty participants enjoyed the Fall 2010 JLI course, Medicine and Morals. The Winter course, Towards a Meaningful Life will begin February 7.



15TH ANNUAL PIAKER MEMORIAL LECTURE



This year's Pauline and Philip M. Piaker Memorial Lecture drew over 150 to a talk by Dr. Paul S. Appelbaum on Jewish Genes: What does Genetics Tell us about our Identity?

GIRLS NIGHT OUT



What can be more fun than girls getting together in honor of **ROSH CHODESH** for fun events, great snacks, thought provoking discussion and female bonding. **SUSHI NITE** was followed by **SPA NITE**... what will they think of next?



WOMEN'S CABARET



A wonderful evening of female bonding and incredible talent—song, music and art—enhanced by the appearance of guest artist **ARIELLA GOLDBERG.**



CHABAD IS ALIVE WITH THE SOUNDS OF TORAH...

8 JLearn choices, Beit Midrash, Advanced Talmud, Pizza and Parasha and Analysis of Rashi are just a few of the choices!



... AND SO MUCH FUN!

For a full gallery of pictures of these events and others please visit: www.JewishBU.com



PAINTBALL!



Hadasa's **CHALLAH BAKING** workshops are all the rage!



Chabad goes **APPLE PICKING** and turns it into scrumptious treats



A GALA WITH CHUTZPAH
— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

I watched the video presentation of my friends Stu and Stacy Mayer. On the video, they spoke of challenges they'd gone through as parents. But the tears were falling because Stu and Stacy could not attend the gala due to a horrific tragedy in the form of the death of Steven Mayer, Stu's father, who had been missing.

On a Facebook posting, Stacy urged people to come to the Chabad gala, nonetheless. How someone could have the mindset to do this was extremely inspiring but typifies the same lesson that Chabad teaches.

That lesson is that it takes a lot of chutzpah to score a touchdown. But the end-zone is not the end, when it comes to the capacity we have to help people and to teach our children. As graduates of Binghamton University, we may not run as fast as we used to. We may not be able to bench-press the weight we used to. After a few more pounds, we may might not be able to fit into the old student clothing. Now, we might wear lab-coats if we work in a hospital or a lavish suits as we litigate in court. But while we may have changed uniforms, the message is the same. That is that the greatest lesson to be learned is that the game is not over and we have not yet won. We will get sacked. We will get hit. We will hurt. We will cry. So it's ok to catch our breath and sit on the sidelines as we take a timeout. But we must never remain too long on the sidelines because there is work to be done and obstacles to be overcome.

We have two choices. We can put our feet up, eat a chocolate soufflé, and wait around, possibly staring at an empty table. Or, we can roll up our sleeves, chop 400 pounds of potatoes and when we see the tables filled with our future in the form of smiling Binghamton students, we can have real chutzpah. And rather than boast, we can smile and act like we've been there before. 🍷

Connect to our readers through

Hakesher הקשר
the connection



Advertise in or sponsor

Hakesher, the Chabad of Binghamton magazine has a circulation of 5000. Binghamton alumni, their families, current students and their families, friends and supporters of Chabad of Binghamton and the Binghamton Jewish community comprise the community of *Hakesher* readers. Get word about your business to this highly primed audience.

We also offer *Hakesher* sponsorship opportunities from individuals and/or businesses.

For details and rates please visit

JewishBU.com/Hakesher



White Rose Day Spa & Hair Design



CREATED BY STYLISTS
WELLA PROFESSIONALS

**See what's new for
Fall & Winter**

644-9123

We are located 5 minutes
away from campus.

WhiteRoseDaySpa.com

The better choice for your prescriptions.

If you've never visited our pharmacy and met our friendly, helpful, professional staff, now's the perfect time.

Quick and easy prescription transfer, just call us—we'll take care of everything, including calling your health care provider.

You'll also find new low prices on thousands of prescriptions

How much will you save?
Ask your Wegmans pharmacist.



**Wegmans
pharmacy**

650 Harry L Drive
Johnson City, NY 13790
(607) 729-7782

*With valid prescription; for a complete list visit wegmans.com

*Where can you
find a large variety
of kosher foods in
Binghamton?*

Price Chopper.

You'll find all the essentials you and your family will enjoy, including a wide selection of kosher grocery, frozen and dairy items within our store.



Plus, kosher meat and poultry!

All kosher meat and poultry
will be delivered weekly
to the Binghamton store
from the Price Chopper
Kosher Store in Colonie, NY.

**For more information
and delivery dates,
please call toll-free at
1-800-727-5674.**

**Including:
Flanken, Roasts,
Bone-in Steaks,
Chicken and
Turkey!**



10 Glenwood Ave, Binghamton • 770-7151



Visit us at:

www.pricechopper.com



Become a fan on Facebook:
PriceChopperSupermarkets



Follow us on Twitter:
PriceChopperNY



Visit our blog:
PriceChopper.wordpress.com

Getting my Kippah License

Paul Brick '12

I jotted down a note on my iPhone in class. My teacher thought he saw me texting, so he reprimanded me. I was indifferent—what do I care what some grad student thinks of me?

Then I remembered I was wearing a kippah, and it got messy.

Because it isn't insignificant- kippahs are much larger than they look. In a basket at shul, or on someone else's head, they look like little circles of cloth. Only when you put them on do you realize they are unwieldy, weighing nothing short of three tons. They are also made of fifty-foot tall steel letters that spell "JEW", and constantly threaten to topple over and crush nearby cars and bystanders. That's why they should require kippah licenses, a little card that says you are prepared and able to accept the dangers that wielding your kippah entails.

I remember in Israel seeing yeshiva boys drunk and wild on Ben Yehuda, an Orthodox man berating his daughter during Yom Kippur services, a merchant hustling some foreigners while assuring them "I'm a Jew too!" These men wore kippahs irresponsibly, and I was a victim. I never wanted to be associated with their kind, these men who were supposed to

represent our moral paragons.

Even after I started becoming observant, I avoided the kippah.

"Put on a kippah- you won't even notice it," my buddy would say.

But other people do. Growing up in Saint Louis, MO, I knew what it's like being the one kid to represent Jews. "He's eating an apple- looks like Jews like apples." "Check it out, Jews like wearing Nike." "Looks like Jews forgot to shave today."

I couldn't do it. I couldn't be an ambassador to gentiles or a role model for Jews. This was a simple fact in my mind. Until I met my hero.

I was walking to class one day when I passed a Jew all decked out: light beard around his jaw, fringes flying, and that troublesome crown on his head. He greeted me in Hebrew and walked on; I think he was humming a Shabbat tune. I thought, his kippah's no steel sign- he is. But he was an incredible kid, courteous and compassionate, someone who would

earn his license with high marks.

Back in that class, I played it cool- that seemed to be what the TA would've respected the most, so I went with that. I still worried about my choice. Maybe he would stumble across the same bathroom graffiti I did, the note "Jews have no souls", and then add something. Maybe I'm just paranoid.

But I still knew I couldn't quit my kippah. I couldn't quit because I had seen someone who wore it right, and realized that perhaps he didn't always. Perhaps he too had worn his kippah irresponsibly before realizing how heavy it was. Perhaps only because of that weight did he become strong enough to carry it.

So yes, it's a pain in the neck to carry this sign around. I feel like only pre-teen girls are this self-conscious, and my behavior's turned a lukewarm G rating. But I'm optimistic when I see how many good guys are walking around campus with kippahs this year, hoping I'm among those making a positive impression, dreaming that someone might see these signs and consider taking one on himself.

But before you do, gentlemen, remember: get your license. [📄](#)

Paul Brick '12 is a Creative Writing major.

This Chanukah Give A Present That Will Last From **Generation to Generation**



Find out how to give your children and grandchildren
THE GIFT OF A LIFETIME



For more information contact:
Brett Zuckerman at (516) 343-7076
brett_zuckerman@npcfinancial.com



Brett Zuckerman is a Financial Representative of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY



420 Murray Hill Road
Vestal, NY 13850

Change service requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
BROOKLYN, NY
PERMIT # 1235

**Chabad Center
for Jewish Student Life
at Binghamton University**

420 Murray Hill Rd.
Vestal, NY 13850

Chabad Downtown

27 Bennet Ave.
Binghamton, NY 13905

607. 797.0015
info@chabadofbinghamton.com

www.JewishBU.com

The Rebbe's Army
90 Countries
1005 Cities
3300 Institutions
4000 Emissary
Couples



Pictured is approximately one third of the photo (see inset) taken of Shlichim in front of 770 Eastern Parkway, Lubavitch World Headquarters on November 7, 2010.

