

CHABAD
OF BINGHAMTON

בס"ד

הקשר Hakasher

the connection



Graduation

2013 **ANNUAL** REPORT PAGE 13
SENIORS **SPEAK** PAGE 17

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About our cover:
A group of friends light candles
together at Shabbat 1500.



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTORS

Dear friend,

There are moments in life that cannot be rushed. Nor can they be staged. One such moment came a few weeks ago for us, when a Shabbat afternoon, found two generations of "Chabad students" in separate but concentric circles chatting casually in our lobby. As it happened, it was open house for accepted students that weekend. While the parents--both sets had been students in Binghamton in the 80's — caught up, their daughters were involved in the most nascent stage of their own Binghamton experience. Observing this was a special thrill.

Dor Holech V'dor Ba, one generation goes and another comes, said King Solomon, but if core values are transmitted properly, the incoming generation will seek what the previous one did. Observers of emerging adults know, however, that the success of this model depends on the ability of each generation to find those same truths on their own terms. It can't be their parents' warm feelings about Judaism or Chabad experience; they have to own it. G-d taught us this truth a long time ago. We have just celebrated Shavuot which marks the giving of the Torah 3,325 years ago. Tradition records that every single Jew was gathered for the revelation at the foot of Mt. Sinai. And yet, the Talmud teaches, the words of the Decalogue were couched specifically in the singular rather than in the plural. While G-d proclaimed the Ten Commandments to the assembled as a group, the same words were individually transmitted to each person in a way that resonated distinctly with her/him. In so doing, G-d was making an important statement: While the strength of the community is imperative, the importance of each individual cannot be overstated. The community is comprised of, and defined by, the individuated contributions. Simultaneously, each person is fueled and propelled forward by the force and weight of the community.

As we watch our graduates leave us, it is with sadness but with pride. We anticipate the important and distinctive ways in which each one of you will go forward and contribute and we pray that you appreciate the importance of—and the gift inherent in—remaining connected to the larger Jewish community.

Rabbi Zalman and Rochel Chein and Rabbi Levi and Hadasa Slonim join us in wishing all our friends a safe and productive summer. To our graduates we say, *l'hitraot*, it's never good bye. Mazel Tov upon this milestone; may you see the fulfillment of your every dream and prayer and may we always and only share joyous occasions. And in the right time, send your kids to Binghamton; we can't wait to have three generations conversing in the lobby.

N'hiye B'kesher, let's stay connected and in touch!

Rabbi Aaron and Rivky Slonim

Hakesher Dedications

This magazine is dedicated in loving memory of

David ben Yitzchak Meir Zenilman

on the occasion of his 20th Yahrzeit.

by his children, Dr. Michael and Marilyn Zenilman and their children,
Jeremy '06, Elliot '09, Daniel '09, Ariela '11, Josh, Dodi '15, Avital, Shoshana and Miriam.

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

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Miriam Geiger



Based on the teachings of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe of righteous memory

TORAH FOR TODAY

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT SINAI?

By Yanki Tauber

And it came to pass on the third day, when morning came, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and the sound of the shofar exceedingly loud; and the entire people within the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with G-d, and they stood at the foot of the mountain... And G-d came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And G-d called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses ascended. Exodus 19:16-20

The most momentous event in history took place on Shabbat, the sixth day of the month of Sivan, in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE). On that day, the entire people of Israel—more than 2 million men, women and children, as well as the souls of all future generations of Jews—gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from G-d. Ever since, the event has been marked on our calendar as the festival of Shavuot, “the Time of the Giving of Our Torah.”

But the Torah we received at Sinai had already been in our possession for many generations. Our ancestors had studied and fulfilled the entire Torah even before it was given, observing its every law and ordinance—including the obligation to make an *eruv tavshilin* when a festival falls on the eve of Shabbat. No new document was unveiled at Sinai, and no hitherto unknown code of behavior was commanded there. What, then, was given to us at The Giving of Our Torah?

The Midrash explains the significance of the event with the following parable:

Once there was a king who decreed: The people of Rome are forbidden to go down to Syria, and the people of Syria are forbidden to go up to Rome. Likewise, when G-d created the world He decreed and said: “The heavens are G-d’s, and the earth is given to man.” But when He wished to give the Torah to Israel, He rescinded His original decree, and declared: The lower realms may ascend to the higher realms, and the higher realms may descend to the lower realms. And I, Myself, will begin—as it is written, “And G-d descended on Mount Sinai, and then it says, “And to Moses He said: Go up to G-d.

For the first twenty-five centuries of history, there existed a *gezeirah*—a decree and schism—which split reality into two hermetic worlds: the spiritual and the physical. The spiritual could not be truly brought down to earth—its very nature defied actualization; nor could the physical be made transcendent and divine—its very nature kept it imprisoned

within the finiteness and mortality of the lower realms. So Torah, the divine wisdom and will, could have no real effect upon the physical world. It was a wholly spiritual manifesto, pertaining to the soul of man and to the spiritual reality of the heavens. While its concepts could, and were, applied to physical life, physical life could not be elevated—it could be improved and perfected to the limits of its potential, but it could not transcend its inherent coarseness and subjectivity.

At Sinai, G-d revoked the decree which had confined matter and spirit to two distinct realms. G-d came down on Mount Sinai, bringing the spirituality of the heavens down to earth. He summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, empowering physical man to raise his physical self and world to a higher state of existence. The Torah could now sanctify physical life.

This encounter between G-d and man at Sinai introduced a new phenomenon: the *cheftza shel kedushah* or holy object. After Sinai, when physical man takes a physical coin, earned by his physical toil and talents, and gives it to charity; or when he bakes flour and water as unleavened bread (*matzah*) and eats it on the first night of Pesach; or when he forms a piece of leather to a specified shape and dimensions, inserts into it parchment scrolls inscribed with specified words, and binds them to his head and arm as *tefillin*—the object with which he has performed his *mitzvah* (divine commandment) is transformed. **A finite, physical thing becomes holy, as its substance and form come to embody the realization of a divine desire and command.**

The *mitzvot* could have been, and were, performed before the revelation at Sinai. But because they had not yet been commanded by G-d, they lacked the power to bridge the great divide between matter and spirit. Only as a command

Cont...Page 26

MORE ONLINE

For a step-by-step Guide and more information about the Shavuot holiday, log onto:

www.jewishbu.com/Shavuot

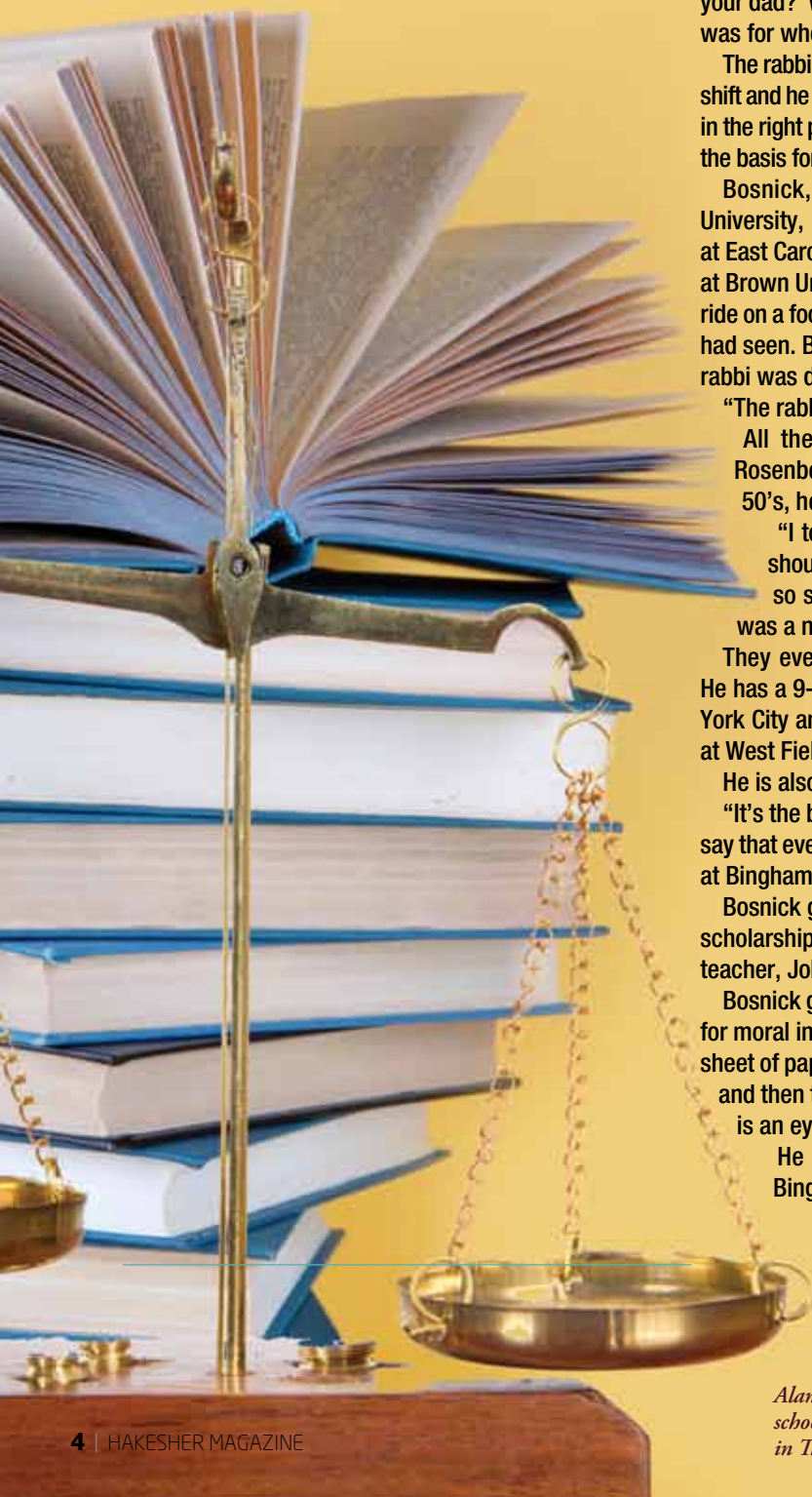


THE TEACHER,

His Wife

& THE RABBIS

By Alan Zeitlin '00



He thought his father might kill the rabbi who did not show up to officiate at his grandmother's funeral. The rabbi arrived 40 minutes late after the ceremony was done and he demanded to be paid. He jumped on their car as they tried to leave the cemetery. Bosnick said his father was 6'4" and 270 pounds.

"It wouldn't have been good if my father got out of the car," Bosnick said. "My father was a scary guy. He sparred with Max Baer. You know how you when you're a kid and you play that game of 'my dad can take your dad?' Well, when you were George Bosnick's son, the only argument was for who could take second place."

The rabbi from Brooklyn was late because he rented a car that was stick-shift and he didn't know how to properly operate it. Seeing that his heart was in the right place, Bosnick agreed to pay the rabbi. What transpired became the basis for Bosnick's short story, "The Rabbi Who Wouldn't Leave."

Bosnick, who teaches Literature and The Law at Binghamton University, recalled leaving Long Island for a unique college experience at East Carolina University because his family could not afford tuition at Brown University which was his first choice. The linebacker got a free ride on a football scholarship but was the first Jew most of his teammates had seen. Before the first game there was a prayer and to his surprise, a rabbi was driven in to give him a special prayer.

"The rabbi cared more about my religion than I did," he said.

All the while Bosnick hoped to reunite with his true love, Liz Rosenberg, whom he had met at Syosset High School. Now in his 50's, he still remembers meeting her.

"I told her we should get married and she said I was crazy and should come back in ten years," he recalled. "She was beautiful... so smart, brave and gentle. But she just wanted to be friends. It was a nightmare."

They eventually married and Bosnick said he could not be happier. He has a 9-year-old daughter, a 25-year-old son who is an actor in New York City and in addition to teaching at Binghamton, he teaches English at West Field Middle School, across the street from his home.

He is also in awe of his wife's new book, "The Laws of Gravity."

"It's the best book written by a woman in the last 20 years and I would say that even if it wasn't my wife." Rosenberg has taught Creative Writing at Binghamton since 1979.

Bosnick got his PhD in English at Binghamton through the presidential scholarship program and it was arranged by the renowned author and teacher, John Gardner.

Bosnick gives his college students assignments that serve as catalysts for moral introspection. On the first day or so, he asks them to take out a sheet of paper and list the Ten Commandments. They turn the paper over and then try to list the ten amendments to the constitution. He says it is an eye-opener for many of the students.

He also said that he saw things in a new way, as Chabad of Binghamton left an indelible mark on him.

"My dad was Orthodox and went to the war and saw what was going on and said he wasn't buying it anymore," Bosnick said. "I thank the Slonims for helping me find God again. I began to understand the things that I had forgotten and the power of prayer and knowledge." ■

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.

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PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST Gives People A Lot To Talk About

By Alan Zeitlin '00

Nathan Englander is not only one of the most celebrated writers to graduate from Binghamton University. He's one of the most celebrated writers in the country. He's been commissioned to write a play for Lincoln Center and his collection of short stories, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank," earned him honors as a finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize For Fiction. "A kind of hard-won wisdom spills out on every page," wrote a New York Times critic.

Despite the accolades, nerves are healthy for a writer, Englander says.

"I'm wracked with doubt," he said. "I would never want to read a writer that was totally confident. I don't know any good writer who isn't filled with doubt."

Englander's best explanation for why he has been successful as a writer is that he totally devoted himself to the craft and could not imagine doing anything else. Asked what he would be if not a writer, he paused and said perhaps he would be a bike messenger.

So with the glowing reviews, fame and awards, is there more pressure?

"I sometimes read it and I sometimes don't," Englander said of reviews. "It depends on my mood. I'm thankful for the support but that's not how you define yourself. If I'm a critic and I tell your you're handsome, that's great. But what happens if next time, I tell you you're ugly? You learn from it and you have to know how to process it."

Most of Englander's work delves into questions of morality, such as his play "The Twenty-Seventh Man" and his first novel, "The Ministry of Special Cases." In the title story, the question of whether or not someone would risk their life to hide someone if there was a Holocaust in America is posed. The author, who is working on a new novel, said he tries to allow the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

Englander, who graduated in 1991, said he learned how to make his writing tighter under the tutelage of Liz Rosenberg, John Vernon and Barry Targan and he said he also was influenced by the classes of Judaic Studies professor Allan Arkush. He said that when he was a junior at Binghamton, he worried that spending the year in Israel might stifle his writing progress if he missed important classes. But his decision to go there impacted him in a positive way and he began to see an open-ness and cultural aspects of Judaism he hadn't seen before, he said.

Englander, who also teaches writing, said he has strict rules when it comes to giving critique.

"I believe in tough love," he said. "You have to be honest and the goal is to help the student improve. And you never know what someone is capable of. Who is to say that if someone doesn't sit down and consistently write for ten years they won't come up with something great?"

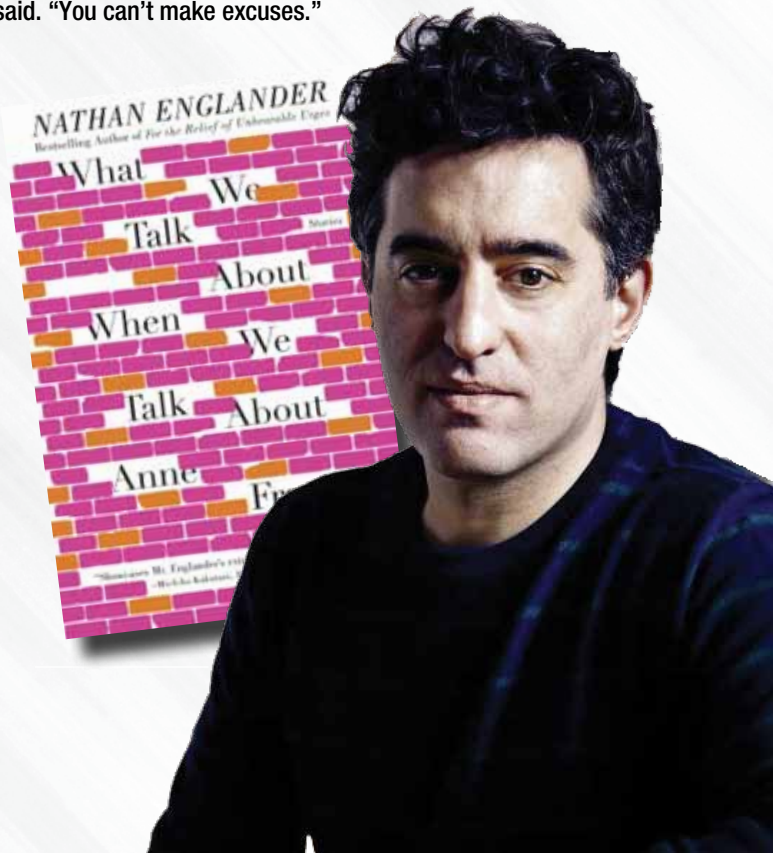
Englander, who said he enjoys the storytelling power of Passover and the reader's task of imagining himself as if he came out of Egypt, wrote a translation of the Haggadah last year. Englander said he remembers going to the kosher kitchen, living among the frat-boys in College-In-The-Woods and going to Chabad a few times.

"The Slonims were always super-nice people," he said. "I am very glad they are still holding down the fort."

Englander said in his own writing, he seeks to fine-tune the proper language and deliver the right degree of emotion. But said he'd offer no critique to Justin Bieber, who while visiting the Anne Frank House wrote in the guestbook that "Hopefully she would have been a Belieber," or a fan of his music.

"He's a 19-year-old kid in a strange position," Englander said. "It's nice he went there. It was Amsterdam so there were a lot of other places he could have gone."

Englander, who won the PEN/Malamud Award for "For the Relief of Unbearable Urges," said writers should resist the urge to view the process as merely a hobby. "You have to go all in," he said. "You can't make excuses."



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.

MAZEL TOVS

- '91 **Tova and Chaim Schild** announce the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Menachem Mendel, on Nissan 29, 5773, April 9, 2013.
- '92 **Jeanette (Dadusc) and Ilan Sade** announce the birth of their daughter, Sara Chana, on March 18, 2013.
- '99 **Nike Silberstien** announces her engagement to Moshe Avritsher; a Summer 2013 wedding is planned.
- '00 **Michele and Jonathan Gross** announce the birth of their daughter, Olivia Arianna, Rachel Leah, born on November 19, 2012. She was welcomed home by big sister, Emily (Tziporah).
- '02 **Rebecca and Aaron Weitman** announce the birth of their son, Joshua Ari in English and Yehoshua Herschel in Hebrew, March 6, 2013.
- '03 **Nancy Saufer** announces her marriage to Alex Ovshey on March 17, 2013.
- '04 **Nir and Hallie (Pollack) Gadon** announce the birth of their daughter, Sara Belle, Sara Bracha, on March 8, 2013. She was welcomed home by big brother Eli.
- '05 **Mitchell and Julie Cepler** announce the birth of their twin children, Liam Robert, Lev Shai, and Scarlett Faena, Ayelet Ruth, on February 13, 2013.
Hallie (Pollack) and Nir Gadon announce the birth of their daughter, Sara Belle. See '04 for full details.
- Marissa Forman and Jeremy Wright** announce the birth of their son, Gil Tamid, Benjamin Hunter, on March 4, 2013.
- Michelle (Pomerantz) and Yonah Singer** announce the birth of their son, Joshua Gabriel, Yosef Gabriel, on March 1, 2013. He was welcomed home by big brother Judah.
- '06 **Dina and Daniel Reznick** announce the birth of their daughter Meira Rivkah, on Adar 28, 5773 corresponding to March 9, 2013. She was welcomed home by big sisters, Rochel, Ellie and Malky.
- Jeremy and Marissa Wright** announce the birth of their son Benjamin Hunter, see '05 for complete details.
- '09 **Shira Prouser** announces her marriage to Avi Kravitz, on March 3, 2013; they make their home on the Upper West Side in NYC. Shira is working as a therapist at Woodhull Medical Center and Avi is a teacher at the Solomon Schechter Elementary School in NJ.
- '11 **Lavinia Feffer** announces her engagement to Michael Solganik. They will be married on June 23, 2013.

SYMPATHIES

Chabad mourns the passing of Dr. Victor Zvyagin, father of Liza Zvyagin '03, on April 6, 2013.

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

For up to date Chabad Alumni news, visit:
www.facebook.com/ChabadBUAlumni



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Over 1700 students gathered in the BU event center to join in a spirit rousing celebration of Jewish pride and community



**SHABBAT
1800**
HERE WE COME!



The student leaders that
made it all happen!



Fashion For A Cure was a resounding success with the Chabad Center packed to capacity with BU women who came out to support Sharsheret and were treated to an absolutely wonderful evening of education, inspiration and sheer fun.



FASHION FOR A CURE

GIRLS' NIGHT OUT SPA NIGHT





Celebrating a Quarter Century of Nourishing Broome County's Jewish Women's Souls

The Women's League for Chabad Annual Salute to Jewish Womanhood featured celebrity chef, Susie Fishbein.



Jewish Learning Institute

*Fifty participants are enjoying the Spring JLI Course entitled **Curious Tales of the Talmud**.*





LAG BOMER 2013



SIYUM MISHNAYOT

Celebrating the Siyum Mishnayot studied daily with Rabbi Chein.

AEPEI

Stumps the Rabbi



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

PHOTOGRAPHS



Tamir Goodman, widely known as The Jewish Jordan shared fascinating vignettes from his life in Division A sports as an observant Jew. On Saturday night he held a basketball clinic for lucky participants.



Competition Shabbat

took Shabbat treats to a whole new level with the annual Dessert bake off and Cholent cook off. The undisputed winners were the fortunate people who got to taste all the treats! (See back cover for more on this event).



THE GNO MIXER

featured a fame of glow in the dark Dodge Ball.

The Spring Semester saw a variety of scholars in residence at Chabad for Shabbatot.

Chava Willing Levy spoke movingly and eloquently in talks titled *A bucket full of Miracles*.

Dr. Miriam Grossman headlined Ladies Night at Chabad, a much heralded annual event.

Candle lighting ceremony leading into **Ladies Night**

At a **Community Havdallah** at Newing



Chabad students, under the aegis of the **Barry Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation** visit the local elderly weekly and before holidays bringing them friendship and cheer.



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



ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013



Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life
at Binghamton University

Where the Jewish future is being formed one student at a time!

The Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life has been serving the Binghamton University community since 1985. Chabad's main center is located adjacent to the campus; its satellite facility is located near downtown Binghamton. Chabad's comprehensive services and stellar programming have enriched the lives of generations of students and positioned Binghamton as one of the highest ranking in terms of Jewish life at a public university.



WHAT?

CHABAD IS ABOUT CELEBRATION!

WHO?

A campus is a place of varied social groups and sub strata. There are virtually hundreds of groups, clubs, teams, Greek groups and other outlets. The most important thing is for a student to find "their place" but it's not always easy. Chabad transcends these dividing lines. It is quite simply a place for every Jewish student. In fact, over the years, hundreds of young people have met their best friends at Chabad. Scores found their spouses at Chabad. All found a sense of family and community.

WHO CAME TO CHABAD THIS YEAR?

- Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors and Grad Students.
- Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and unaffiliated Jews.
- Liberals and Conservatives.
- Greeks and Geeks.
- Party Animals and Book Worms.
- Sephardim and Ashkenazim.
- Students on campus and students living off campus.



• Shabbat

The Shabbat experience at Chabad is the heart and soul of Jewish life at BU. The magic began each Friday night as hundreds of students streamed to the Center for services followed by a full course, home cooked dinner, topped off by a fabulous dessert buffet. But it didn't stop there. There were Shabbat services and lunch, Seudah Shlishit and Havdallah. And this was just the beginning:

- High Holiday Services
- Post Yom Kippur Break the Fast
- Festive meals in a Sukkah that seats 400
- Jazzukah; a rib and music festival in the Sukkah
- Pop up Sukkahs and a Sukkah Mobile providing mitzvos on the spot for Jews on the go
- Simchat Torah Bash
- Campus wide Chanukah kit distribution
- Grand Chanukah Celebration
- Chanukah Celebrations ay Frat-Houses
- Purim Carnival Extravaganza
- Megillah Readings
- Purim Shpiel • Purim Feast
- Lag B'omer BBQ
- Shabbat 1500, the largest Shabbat dinner on any campus, anywhere! A record 1750 participants!
- Girls Night Out to celebrate Rosh Chodesh
- Community Havdalah Celebrations
- Shavuot Services, all night Learn-A-Thon, and dinners

BY THE NUMBERS

Close to

2200

different students participated in Chabad sponsored events this year with hundreds participating on a regular basis.

980 feet danced on Simchat Torah

4930 bottles of soda downed

240 lbs. of Hamantashen eaten at Purim celebrations

1670

lbs. of flour made into challah and cake for Shabbat

BY THE NUMBERS

1450 Menorah Kits distributed

11660 bowls of chicken soup enjoyed

CHABAD IS ABOUT EDUCATION

TORAH CLASSES

Chabad offered an endless stream of educational opportunities both formal and informal. Torah classes — in large groups or personal tutorials — covered everything from Hebrew reading to advanced Talmudic study and analysis of Biblical texts. The best part was that these classes were attended not for credit, not for parental approval and not for monetary stipends but for the love of learning and the yen to connect more deeply.



Beit Midrash / Supper with Study

Lunch and Learn

Pizza and Parsha

Hebrew Reading Crash course

Shabbatons with Guest speakers
and Scholars in Residence

Jewish Learning Institute

BY THE NUMBERS

6870 HOURS
of Judaic classes
taught

185 Students
engaged in
study

22 Weekly
Classes
offered

45
ONE-ON-ONE
weekly tutorials



CHABAD IS ABOUT FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY

FUN EVENTS

Everyone needs a place to just kick back and have some fun. And boy did Chabad offer a smorgasbord of cool events where students met great people and had a blast!

- Challah Baking
- Ashkefardic Night
- Apple Picking
- Paint Ball Shooting
- Ski Trip
- Midnight Madness Breakfasts
- Cholent Cook Off and Dessert Bake Off
- Intramural Sports Team
- Guys Nite Out
- Tea and Talk
- Water Pong Tournament
- Girl's Talent Show
- Welcome Back BBQ (Fall) & Sushi (Spring)



BY THE NUMBERS

174 SPECIAL EVENTS
held this year

CHABAD IS ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL ACTION



One of the most important and enduring gifts Chabad gave our students this year was the ability to get involved in our student governing body, volunteer at Chabad or elsewhere, reach into the community to touch the lives of the elderly and the infirm, and raise crucially needed funds for all kinds of needy causes. “Giving is getting” is more than just a motto; at Chabad it’s a way of life.

- Barry J. Raff Maasim Tovim Foundation
- Fashion for a Cure raised awareness about breast cancer and raised funds for Sharsheret
- Chanukah Toy Drive with NY based Chai Lifeline distributing them to pediatric cancer patients.
- Purim Prize Drawing Charity drive
- “Chicken Soup For The Sick” deliveries
- Campus Wide Mitzvah Marathon
- Charity Drives
- Blood Drives through the Red Cross

BY THE NUMBERS

\$17,070

Funds raised for various charities

64

STUDENTS ON leadership board

978

HOURS VOLUNTEERED within the wider community

WHY?

WHY DID STUDENTS COME THIS YEAR? SO MANY REASONS!

It’s where they found daily minyan, a state of the art fitness center, a Kosher Café, a Jewish library and research center, comfortable lounges, a fully equipped game room, free wireless internet service, hot drinks and cookies in endless supply, plus staff that offer counseling, crisis intervention and referrals with open minds and hearts.

It’s where they found the coolest people and the warmest atmosphere, a sense of family and a pulsating community. It’s where they enjoyed unconditional love and acceptance and strengthened their Jewish pride and joy in belonging.



WHEN?

24/7. THE DOORS OF CHABAD WERE NEVER CLOSED.

The college years are when our youth make pivotal choices about their future: their identities, their affiliation, their commitments, their spouses and the communities to which they will want to belong. Their decisions will shape our collective future. **It’s where they found a home.**

Please help us by investing in Jewish futures today!

For photos and videos of our events, for press coverage and features, and to access our **secure online donation site**, please visit

WWW.JEWISHBU.COM



A SPECIAL HAKESHER GRADUATION FEATURE

SENIORS SPEAK OUT

After 4 years the graduates know it all!
We asked our graduates to share their thoughts, feelings and hard earned wisdom:



Avi Alboher

MAJOR: Psychology
FUTURE PLANS:
SUNY Optometry



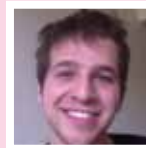
Justin Bassalian

MAJOR: English
FUTURE PLANS:
Undecided



Anna Bitterbaum

MAJOR: Environmental
Studies
FUTURE PLANS:
Graduate School



Paul Brick

MAJOR: Creative Writing
FUTURE PLANS: Not to
compromise on dreams.



Deborah Duke

MAJOR: Psychology
FUTURE PLANS: Psy.D.
in School Psychology



Rachel Engle

MAJOR: Political Science and Psychology

FUTURE PLANS: Undecided



Jessica Feuerstein

MAJOR: Integrative Neuroscience

FUTURE PLANS: To become a Psychiatrist



Shaina Fischer

MAJOR: Psychology and Spanish

FUTURE PLANS: Graduate School for Education



Jon Ganzarski

MAJOR: Geography

FUTURE PLANS: Completing my MBA



Elana Greenberg

MAJOR: Integrative Neuroscience

FUTURE PLANS: Undecided

THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON I LEARNED FROM MY PARENTS IS...

Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind. - Dr. Seuss *Johanna S*

The value of [constant] learning, accepting others, and to keep an open mind. *Tara S*

Do not be afraid to be the person you want to be. *Talya K*

To keep an open mind as to what your future may bring. *Rachel H*

How to be the best person I can be. *Emily T*

It's okay to make mistakes. What is important is that you learn from them to avoid making them again in the future. *Sara S*

Always make a list. *Oren R*

Modesty is beauty. *Eliana H*

"Behave". *Paul B*

Do not be afraid to try. *Jasmine P*

Integrity above all else. *Benji S*

Always be yourself, never try to be someone else. *Avi A*

To never take anything for granted. *Deborah D*

We should learn to listen to and be confident in ourselves because we are often much smarter than we judge ourselves to be. *Jessica W*

Never take no for an answer. *Ben K*

If you work hard enough, you can get anywhere in life. Also, never drink the punch. *Shaina Y*

THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON I LEARNED IN COLLEGE IS...

Giving to others only contributes to your own personal growth, and to look for others' hidden talents (and draw them out). *Tara S*

To chase your passions and never allow fear to stop you from doing something you love. *Talya K*

To always know what you want out of life. *Rachel H*

That people are incredibly complex and full of contradictions but it is beautiful. *Johanna S*

Luck means nothing without hard work. *Benji S*

You learn more from your experiences than anything you learn in a classroom. *Shaina Y*

How to get out of my comfort zone and try new things! *Emily T*

Be true to yourself, always. *Deborah D*

Grades are not the only important aspect to college, it is also the environment you surround yourself in, having great friends, and having fun! *Sara S*

How to get things done. *Max K*

To never give up on your goals and always stay true to yourself. *Eliana H*

The greatness in honesty- with yourself and your loved ones. It's the starting point of growth. *Paul B*

To not be afraid to step out of my comfort zone and try new things. *Justin B*

Work hard for what you want. *Jessica F*

MAZEL TOV *Greetings*

Congratulations **Emily**, We are so proud of you!
Love Mazel, Mom, Dad & Benji

In honor of **Eliana Esther Frim** on her graduation.
I am so proud of you! Love, Mommy

Mazel tov to **Stephanie Bassan!**
We're so proud of you.
Love Mom, Dad, David, Leah & Sarah

Congratulations **Leanna**,
We wish you a world of sunshine & success!
Love Mom & Dad

In honor of **Jessica Wasserman**
congratulations on your graduation.
Love Mom, Dad & family

In honor of **Allison Mandelbaum's** graduation.
Mazel tov!

Mazal Tov **Ari** upon your graduation!
Wishing you much bracha.
Love, Mom, Dad, Rucheli & Bubby



Samantha Greenstein

MAJOR: History and
Judaic Studies

FUTURE PLANS:
Dental School



Rachel Herring

MAJOR: Integrative
Neuroscience

FUTURE PLANS:
Physician Assistant
Masters Program



Daniel Harris

MAJOR:
Accounting



Rachel Hollander

MAJOR: Anthropological
Perspectives

FUTURE PLANS:
Pre-School Teacher



Ben Heller

MAJOR: English and
Creative Writing

FUTURE PLANS:
Law School



Devorah Hornstein

MAJOR: History
Minor: Hebrew

FUTURE PLANS: Graduate
School for Education and
Social Studies



Eliana Horowitz

MAJOR: Psychology

FUTURE PLANS:
Doctorate of Physical
Therapy at Stony
Brook University



Max Kapelus

MAJOR: Philosophy,
Politics and Law

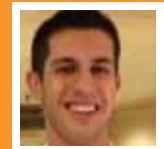
FUTURE PLANS:
Undecided



Talya Keshner

MAJOR: Human
Development

FUTURE PLANS:
Occupational therapist



Ben Khakshour

MAJOR: Pre-Med

FUTURE PLANS:
Medical School

ADVICE TO REMAINING STUDENTS...

Be involved. I wasn't involved at first and I am a much happier person now that I am. There is so much to do and you get to feel that you are a part of something and that you are actually making a difference. It also goes both ways. If you give of yourself to them then you will get back anything and everything that you could ever need in terms of comfort, advice and just a homey environment when college can sometimes feel big and scary. *Devorah H*

Binghamton is famous for our vibrant Jewish community. Take advantage of all it has to offer! Go to shabbat every week, even when it's bitter cold outside. Go to Israel, travel.

Judaism is consistent; it's what remains even when everything else is in flux. College brings great change, each year presenting new challenges. However, no matter what craziness might hit you in a week know that Friday night is special. The moment you sit down for shabbat services and a beautiful, warm meal, everything is put in perspective. *Johanna S*

College is the only setting in which it is so easy to make friends

so make the most of it! Say hi to everyone and remember every new face when you walk in could be your best friend when you walk out. *Samantha G*

Graduation will steal your friends every year, and they will be replaced by students who you relate to less and less as you get older. Do not be fooled by their youth or their foreignness—they have a lot to teach you. Remember that you were their age once too. Be friendly and open, and you will gain more than you can imagine. *Paul B*

Being a Jew means to...perform acts of love and kindness and to truly protect and take care of the world and each other. It is to connect with yourself, others and G-d, daily, through Shabbat (days of rest; i.e. Sabbath), and holidays. *Tara S*

Take advantage of all the opportunities you have as a Jewish student at Binghamton University and especially at Chabad. For some students, cooking in the kitchen on Thursday afternoons is the best part of their time at Chabad and for others it's a JLearn class or Shabbat dinner. My best advice is to get involved with Jewish life on-

campus now if you haven't already because before you know it, you'll be figuring out what you would like to say in your graduation edition of Hakesher. *Rachel E*

Always make sure to surround yourself with good people; the friends you make in college will remain your friends throughout your life. You can never get your college years back, so make sure to make the very most of it while you can! Remember, Chabad is not only a place to learn; it's a place to see familiar faces, meet new people, and a place to unwind after a stressful week. *Shaina Y*

If you have new ideas that you think will be liked and beneficial to the community, then make sure you get heard. There are so many great people who want to hear your ideas and help you turn them into a reality. As seniors we have done all that we could. You all are lucky enough to have more college years ahead of you. Make them count, get involved, and make a difference. The opportunities are endless. *Max K*

Keep your idea of what you want fluid. It is not responsible to hold steadfast to an idea of yourself that may no longer be consistent with what you really want for yourself. It is not a weakness to change. It's easy in such a small and insular community to feel

locked into a specific identity, but this community also has a great capacity for acceptance. This is the perfect place to figure out who you really want to be and to become that person. *Benjy S*

Chabad offers many great Jewish programs and events on a weekly basis and they truly want every student on campus to be involved. If there is any doubt in your mind about attending an event that you think you may find interesting, go! Get involved! You never know who you will meet or what you may learn about yourself in such a short period of time. *Rachel H*

This is the only time in your life where your religious community will be made up entirely of people your age. Take advantage of this and make sure to get as involved as possible. It may seem hard to get to events when you are busy with school work, but before you know it you will be graduating and wish you had! After all, you won't really remember your day to day college life so much as you will the special events you participated in. Have a great time and use it to the fullest! *Deborah D.*

Take advantage of what you are being offered here at Chabad. Don't let the wonderful opportunities for learning and growing pass you by. *Leanne P.*



Jasmine Patihl

MAJOR: PPL and Judaic Studies

FUTURE PLANS: Aliya



Leanne Pinard

MAJOR: Economics

FUTURE PLANS: To work at a not for profit organization



Oren Rasekh

MAJOR: Computer Science

FUTURE PLANS: Software development engineering at Amazon.com



Sabrina Rose

MAJOR: Psychology

FUTURE PLANS: Masters in Speech-language pathology



Johanna Sanders

MAJOR: Sociology

FUTURE PLANS: Next year I will be studying and travelling in South Africa & India

ADVICE TO REMAINING STUDENTS... (continued)

Jewish life enhances your time in college; it can give you a group of friends, a meal every night, things to do on a Sunday, a quiet place to study, means for introspection, advice, and more - take part in it!!!
Jasmine P

After my years here at Binghamton and my experiences involved in Chabad, I can tell you that if you get involved it will be your best college experience!
Sabrina R

College is about meeting new people, creating new experiences, forming your own opinions and creating your own path. In order to do that, one has to take advantage of everything offered to them. Get involved where ever you can, not only in your comfort zone, or where your friends are. Find things outside the bubble you had in your hometown, your high school, or your year in Israel if you did one. Utilize the Chabad staff and everything else you can, in order to be an independent, free thinking, self-aware adult. Only through a wide range of experiences and lessons can you become the type of leader the greater Jewish community needs.
Jon G

Be true to your Jewish identity and all of the rest will fall into place. It is very easy to feel as though you are "missing out on your secular college experience"

by staying Jewishly observant, but really I found that, that was never the case. Be who you are and be proud!
Aimee S

Make the most of college experience. Don't get into routine where you are doing the same activities and hanging out with the same people for all 4 years of your college experience. Broaden your horizons by trying out different activities, clubs and hanging out with new people.
Justin B

Take the initiative and get involved. Go to events, prayer services or just participate in a community service programs. Make Jewish life on campus a priority and the benefits you receive will be greater than the effort you make.
Jessica F

Go to Chabad. They have great Gefilta Fish and even better company.
Danny H

What is great about the Jewish life at Binghamton University is that no matter what level of Judaism you want to practice, Binghamton has it all. So many of my friends are apart in some way or another with the Jewish life. These are the friends that I have made for life. So, whether you are an observant Jew or not, don't hesitate to try out Friday night dinners or even services. You never know, your best friends can be found there!
Sara S

MY FAVORITE / MOST MEANINGFUL MOST IMPORTANT JEWISH EXPERIENCE AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY WAS...

Ladies' Shabbat with Dr. Grossman.
Tara S

Cooking on Thursday afternoons for Shabbat.
Rachel E

Simchat Torah and Jlearn.
Shaina Y

Fall semester junior year, I was doing work on campus, and "big Mendel Slonim" found me studying in the C4 and made sure that I had the opportunity to shake the lulav and etrog that day. It's amazing how Chabad makes Judaism so accessible.
Aimee B

Shabbat 1500.
Ben H

Kabbalat Shabbat during Ladies Night.
Elana G

Having my Bat Mitzvah at Chabad. It was extremely special and fun for me!
Anna B

The Purim Carnival!
Sara S

Friday night dinners. There's nothing better than Shabbos dinner with 350 of your closest friends.
Max K

My first Friday night as a transfer student.
Benji S

Welcoming 1,700 students to Shabbat dinner in my capacity as student president of Chabad.
Samantha G

Shabbat 1500.
Justin B

Witnessing a fellow student having a bar mitzvah for the first time in his life.
Avi A

Friday Nights at Chabad.
Jessica F

Seeing the Sukkahmobile drive around campus blasting Hebrew music.
Danny H

My first Supper and Study.
Ben K

Simchat Torah.
Rachel H

Congratulations Talya!

Dear Talya,

We are so proud of you for following the road less travelled. Keep following your passions and dreams.

**Love, Mommy, Daddy, Yonatan,
Yael and Yonina
and family pets**



Congratulations to Akiva Blickstein

Magna Cum Laude, Watson School of Engineering, '13.

WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU.

**Your loving Mother & Father
& entire family**



Mazel Tov Eliza On Your Graduation

May all your future endeavors be as successful as your experience at Binghamton and Chabad. Kol Hakovod to Chabad for providing a home away from home for Eliza.

Sandy and Mark Abraham



Congratulations Alec!

Mazal Tov on your graduation and on all of your accomplishments! We are so proud of you and wish you health, happiness and success in the future!

Love, Mom, Dad, Risa, & Cara



Congratulations

TO

Jonathan Ganzarski

and the Class of 2013

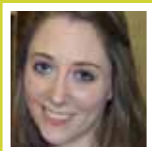
**Jon, we are so proud of you
and your success in college.**

**We're sure you'll continue
to make us proud
in everything you do.**

Love Mom, Steven & Zach

CHABAD IS...

- An oasis. *Tara S*
- A place where there is always an extra seat at the table. *Johanna S*
- A place of genuine kindness. *Elana G*
- A home away from home. *Shaina F*
- I have always felt welcome there. *Emily T*
- Somewhere I always look forward to going. *Shaina Y*
- Invaluable. *Jasmine P*
- Instant family. *Rachel H*
- Welcoming and very memorable. *Rachel H*
- My second family. *Sabrina R*
- A house with always-open doors. *Tara S*
- Extremely generous...an unbelievable organization. *Ben K*
- Everything. The most amazing substitute for a home environment that there could ever be. *Deborah H*
- Truly special. A place where I can celebrate being Jewish and catch up with friends. The best! *Deborah D*
- Access to Jewish life for all students from all backgrounds. *Oren R*
- Where great memories are made. *Moshe Y*
- Where I ate, slept, exercised, did homework, and spent time with the people I love—where else do you do that? *Paul B*
- The starting point. *Benjy S*
- Giving. *Avi A*
- Amazing. *Shaina Y*
- A Community. *Oren R*
- Home of the best Matzah ball Soup. *Danny H*



Sara Schneider

MAJOR: Economics and Anthropology

FUTURE PLANS: Gain work experience and then go back to school for an MBA



Tara Schneider

MAJOR: Accounting, Leadership & Consulting, Graphic Design

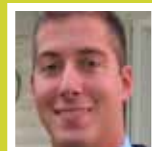
FUTURE PLANS: Working at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Internal Audit/Advisory, at a Start-Up, and Freelance Design & Strategy Consulting



Benjy Shuter

MAJOR: Creative Writing

FUTURE PLANS: Television Production



Alec Staszewski

MAJOR: EHistory and Philosophy, Politics and Law



Aimee Steimetz

MAJOR: Judaic Studies

FUTURE PLANS: I will be getting married this Summer and making Aliya soon after

HOW MY TIME IN BINGHAMTON IMPACTED MY JEWISH IDENTITY AND FEELINGS OF CONNECTION TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY...

Chabad, in its openness and full acceptance of all (Jew and non-Jew), supported and fostered my own personal growth. Because of the supportive and community aspect of Chabad, I feel more connected to my Jewish roots, after a hiatus from my Jewish education since becoming Bat Mitzvah. I have a strong appreciation and value for Shabbat, and the sense of community, hospitality, friendship, and rest that celebrating Shabbat brings. *Tara S*

Coming to a secular college after twelve years of yeshiva education, I was worried that I would grow distant from my Jewish roots. I am proud and fortunate enough to say that the opposite occurred; I managed to grow both spiritually and personally in my few years at Binghamton. My Jewish identity was strengthened and fostered by Chabad and the endless opportunities they provided me with whether it was the Judaic classes, Shabbat meals, or Girls Nights Out. I am also lucky to have been able to watch some of my closest friends here grow in Judaism, including those who did not come from a similar background to mine. These friends, as well as Chabad, have truly inspired me in many ways

that will help me grow and continue my Jewish way of life in the future. *Shaina Y*

Before attending Binghamton, I was never really a part of a Jewish community. Chabad at Binghamton introduced me to a Jewish community and showed me how invaluable that aspect of life is to me. My appreciation of a community began the first week I attended Binghamton, when I went to the Chabad BBQ and was greeted by a smiling faced student president at the time. Feeling honored and welcomed by such an important student led me to attend my first Kabbalat Shabbat service in a long time. That one service developed into weekly attendance of Shabbat services—that I now insist on making a part of my life once I graduate. *Jasmine P*

When I got to Binghamton I knew I wanted to be involved in the Jewish community. I came from a high school that didn't have many Jews and I couldn't wait to make the Jewish community my home. Chabad welcomed me with open arms and each week I met with a small group of freshman girls and Hadasa for "Tea and Talk". Those weekly meeting made me feel included and still stand as strong college memories. My four years at Binghamton have been marked by countless Jewish events and weekly

shabbat services and dinners. My experience at Binghamton would not have been the same without our extraordinary Jewish community. *Johanna S*

Being at Binghamton has helped me learn the way I wish to practice Judaism now, and in my future, and how I want to raise a Jewish family. Chabad has helped me learn about my Jewish traditions and laws in a way I never had access to growing up going to public school. I was always observant and close to my Jewish background but Binghamton gave me a chance to be Jewish in the way that I chose. *Aimee S*

I grew up in a Jewish bubble in Woodmere, NY. Attending Binghamton University was my first experience outside of this bubble and for the first time I was given the freedom to choose between either remaining observant or taking in the 'real college experience' through drifting away from my religious values. This challenge made me realize that my Jewish values are what brought meaning to my everyday life. I learned to love Shabbat because it gave me time every week to put away my work and technologies and focus on the truly meaningful aspects of my life, namely, my relationships with friends and family. I made the effort to learn Chassidut at least once a

week with Rivkah Slonim which broadened my understanding of man's relationship with God and how this understanding could be incorporated into everyday relationships. *Talya K*

My four years in Binghamton started off with my involvement in Chabad being for what I needed (Shabbat Dinners, etc.) and then as I got more involved I realized how much more there was to get out of Chabad and how much I could give back. Chabad has strengthened my connection to Judaism and to the Jewish community at Binghamton. I have become involved in classes and in other events, and Chabad created these connections for me and helped me foster my knowledge of Judaism and expand it. I am leaving with my Judaism open for more and more information and expansion and knowledge in the future and I credit that to Chabad 100%. *Devorah H*

Without Chabad, my relationship to Judaism in Binghamton would have been very different. Transferring from Yeshiva University, I was worried that Binghamton was too far away from everything to maintain a real connection to the Jewish community. With Chabad at its center, the Jewish community in Binghamton University was a welcome transition. I can say with confidence that the friendly,



Emily Taubenblatt

MAJOR: Environmental Planning

FUTURE PLANS: Spending a year in Israel and traveling.



Jessica Wasserman

MAJOR: Psychology

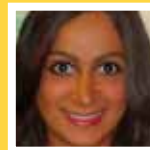
FUTURE PLANS: New York Medical College for Masters in speech-language pathology



Moshe Yeganeh

MAJOR:

Mechanical Engineering



Shaina Yossefzadeh

MAJOR:

Psychology, pre-health

relaxed atmosphere here has helped me grow into a more well rounded individual with a better understanding of what it means to be a Jewish adult. *Benjy S*

Chabad has been an amazing experience for me. Show up to any event or Friday night dinner and it is immediately evident how much hard work and care goes into all of it. Talk to any one of the Rabbis or Rebbetzins and it is clear how much they love doing it. I didn't plan on getting involved in Chabad when I first got to school, but thankfully I did. Seeing their continuous hard work and devotion to the betterment and success of this Jewish community has really taught me and at this point instilled in me that great Jewish communities don't just happen and that we all need to strive for and work toward a great Jewish community no matter where we are. *Max K*

Chabad provided me with the opportunity to be part of a community in which I feel comfortable and welcomed and gave me the foundation to continue my Jewish learning and religious observance on campus. *Oren R*

Throughout my college experience at Binghamton I have spent nearly every Friday evening welcoming in Shabbat at Chabad. It was at Chabad where I made nearly all of my friends. Without this wonderful place I would not have had the opportunity to build the enduring friendships that I am so fortunate to have while simultaneously embracing my Jewish identity. I had a great Jewish experience that largely defined my experience at Binghamton. This I owe to my parents, who encouraged me to attend Binghamton because

of its Jewish community, and to Chabad for providing the endless opportunities and Jewish experiences. *Jessica W*

When I came to college, I had lost interest in many of the Mitzvahs I had once observed. It was only because my roommate and friends were regularly involved in Jewish life that I considered becoming a more observant person. Lessons, *Dvar Torahs*, and classes aside, there is something incredibly powerful about simply giving Jewish students a place to be themselves together, and Chabad provides that free of charge. *Paul B*

My overall Jewish identity and my pride in being Jewish has grown tremendously over the course of my time at Binghamton University, largely due to the wonderful efforts of Chabad. From memorable Shabbat meals, to fun trips, to thoughtful advice, they are always there for any student, at any time. *Ben H*

After attending a private Jewish day school for 12 years of my life I wanted to make sure that my Jewish experience in college would further enhance everything that I had learned throughout my youth. Luckily, Binghamton had a large Jewish community with students who felt the same way. As a freshman, I was confident in my Jewish identity and the connection I had with Judaism and Israel. But it was not until my senior year, when I was mature enough to understand, that my connection grew stronger. Although I am sure I can think of a few things that have impacted this growth, I know that Chabad was definitely a factor in this process. *Rachel H*

From the moment I first stepped foot on campus as a Freshman, Jewish life at BU was there to support me. One of the highlights of my first year here was going to Tea and Talk with Hadasa each week. It was so nice to have a group of Jewish girls that I could count on to talk to, sharing stories and experiences. I am so thankful for Tea and Talk still today because I met people who have been some of my best friends throughout my four years at Binghamton sitting there each week chatting over tea and cake. *Deborah D*

I started college with a strong Jewish identity but over my four years in Binghamton my Jewish pride has strengthened and this is greatly due to my involvement within Chabad. Binghamton is an amazing place to be Jewish and being a leader within my community allowed me to really understand how the community works and see first hand what a tight knit, big family we are and how difficult that is to find! *Samantha G*

Over the past four years I have connected to my Jewish heritage, through values and ideals that were presented to me as a result of my affiliation with Chabad. I realized that once I was given the freedom to choose when and where I wanted to be and which events I wanted to attend, my choice was always the same, Chabad. Thanks to these experiences, my Jewish values are those that I want for myself, and not those that the people around me expect me to have. I am forever grateful that I was able to make these choices surrounded by friends and people that I will forever consider to be family. *Jessica F*

I came to Binghamton friendless and naive, unaware of what the supposed best four year of my life had in store for me. All I knew was that I was a freshmen living in Dickenson and the only Jew on the floor. World of Warcraft was about to become a major part of my life. Baruch Hashem for Chabad. I have met my closest friends and some of the most important people in my life at Chabad. Literally as I sit on my couch thinking of my friends, 99% have been made through Chabad. Chabad has provided for me a home away from home, a place where I can celebrate and partake in the Jewish holidays and customs and sustain my yiddishkeit. *Danny H*

Chabad made it extremely easy for me to maintain my Jewish roots. By providing me with a huge Jewish community, Chabad really allowed me to continue to be close with god and Judaism. With programs like supper and study, not only was I able to stay close to my Jewish roots but I was able to expand them and grow as well. *Ben K*

**Mazal Tov
to**

**Benjy
and his
friends!**

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MIRIAM **GEIGER** '15

STUDENTSPOTLIGHT

THE PAINTER & BAKER IS A MOVER & SHAKER

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks at the Boston Marathon, Miriam Geiger knew that she'd be drawing something. But she didn't know what. As the illustrator for Pipe Dream's Editorial page, she had to strike the right balance.

"It was one of the more challenging ones to do," she said. "How do you portray the sadness and the tragedy but also give hope for the future? I decided to have one runner carrying the other across the finish line."

The sophomore, who used to draw portraits at carnivals for NCSY had three pieces on display at the Art Museum on campus, including a painting that shows the view over the science complex.

Geiger landed a coveted teaching assistant position for Theater 102. She said some students who act like they're paying attention need to try harder.

"As a student you don't notice it so much, but as a TA, you can tell when people are texting under the desk or when they're on Facebook," she said. "They think they're being so subtle, but it's blatant."

Geiger was a stage manager for a production last year, and said it would be ideal to find a shomer-Shabbat theater troupe. She hails from Columbus, Ohio, and is a fan of the show "Breaking Bad" though she doesn't have a TV in her room because she doesn't have time to watch. She's a fan of Mumford & Sons and she does have a guitar - 1967 Silvertone, which her father bought from a nun. Geiger is also a production manager for Challah For Hunger and she kicks it up a notch to make sure anywhere between 72-100 challahs are sold per week for charity.

She also takes a tae kwon do class.

"I'm small so I need all the help I can get," she said.

She finds time to teach Hebrew and Judaic studies to young children and worked with a child with Autism.

She said she looks forward to weekly parsha classes at Chabad as well as knowing she has a place to go to.

"I love that they're always there for me," she said. "Just to know that there's someone there to give good advice, it's very comforting."

Geiger does get tired sometimes, like the time she fell asleep and missed Chabad services and dinner when her roommate and friends had planned to have a surprise birthday party for her.

As for her future plans, Geiger says she's a little bit geeky and might write and illustrate graphic novels. The poet, who is double-majoring in English and Studio Art, believes people should work against apathy.

"People live in their own little universe," she said. "There are simple things like holding the door open for someone or asking someone who's crying 'what's wrong?' I am not saying we all will be able to end world hunger. But we're all in a giant spaceship circling around. We need to get involved and take notice of what we're doing."



of G-d, creator and delineator of both the spiritual and the physical, could the *mitzvah* supersede the natural definitions of these two realms. Only after Sinai could the *mitzvah* actualize the spiritual and sanctify the material.

The Absorbent World

Therein lies the significance of a curious detail related by our sages regarding the revelation at Sinai.

The Torah tells us that G-d spoke the Ten Commandments in “a great voice, which did not cease” (Deuteronomy 5:19). The Midrash offers a number of interpretations for this description of the divine voice. One interpretation is that the divine did not confine itself to the holy tongue but reverberated in mankind’s seventy languages. A second meaning is that the voice did not cease on that particular Shabbat morning some 3,300 years ago: throughout the generations, all the prophets and sages who prophesied, taught and expounded upon the wisdom of the Torah are the extension of that very voice, for they added nothing that was not already inherent in the Ten Commandments. Finally, the Midrash offers a third explanation of the voice’s “unceasing” nature: the divine voice at Sinai was unique in that it had no echo.

The first two interpretations obviously point to the universality and timelessness of Torah. But what is “great and unceasing” about a voice that has no echo? Why should the divine voice at Sinai have been distinguished in this manner from all other sounds?

In truth, however, the echoless nature of the divine communication conveys the very essence of what transpired at Sinai. An echo is created when a sound meets with a substance which resists it: instead of absorbing its waves, the substance repels them, bouncing them back to the void. Prior to Sinai, the voice of Torah had an echo. Belonging to the spirituality of the heavens, it could not truly penetrate the physicality of the earth. The world might hear of Torah and be affected by it; but there remained a certain degree

of resistance, as the Torah and the physical world each remained defined by their respective “higher” and “lower” realms. At Sinai, however, G-d rescinded the decree which had severed the heavens from the earth. The world could now fully absorb the divine voice; a physical object could now become one with its mission and role.

The Empowering Precedent

Therein lies an important lesson to us as we pursue our mission in life to implement the ethos and ideals of Torah in our world.

At Sinai we were charged to serve as “a light unto the nations” – to actualize in our own lives, and to teach all of humanity, that no matter what the conditions of a particular time, place or society may be, there is an all-transcendent, unequivocal, divinely ordained truth and moral code of behavior to which to adhere.

At times, we might be confronted with a seemingly unresponsive and even resisting world. It may appear that one or another of the Torah’s precepts does not fit in with the prevalent reality. So the Torah tells us that the voice which sounded G-d’s message to the world had no echo.

The voice of the Ten Commandments permeated every object and reality in the universe. So any resistance we may possibly meet in implementing them is superficial and temporary. For at Sinai, the essence of every created being was made consistent with, and wholly receptive to, the goodness and perfection which G-d desires of it.

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