

NEWS

LIVING WITH MOSHIACH AROUND THE WORLD

SCOUTING FOR NESHAMOS

BY ALIZA KARP

They were fasting because it was Tisha B'Av. The weather was stormy. One of the team was facing eviction because he had told the son of a 'higher-up' that he was not Jewish. The tent designated for the presentation was too small and by now it was flooded. A recipe for disaster? Or an opportunity to transform the undesirable events of Bein HaMetzarim to gladness through Ahavas Yisroel?

Located at Fort A.P. Hill near Fredericksburg, Virginia, and held once every four years, the Boy Scout Jamboree is a massive get together for boy scouts from across the nation and beyond. They spend ten days together with access to fabulous activities and exhibits. Part of the program includes a visit from the President of the United States.

Forty thousand people attended the Jamboree this summer, held from July 23rd to August 1st. It is estimated that more than 1,000 were Jewish. Amongst

those, 250 ordered kosher food. Of these, 120 were part of a special Shomer Shabbat Contingent. This Contingent was organized under the banner of Tzofim Daataim, by former teacher in the Chabad Day School of Sharon, MA, Dr. Howard Speilman. Speilman is known as an activist for promoting Torah in the scouting world.

The Boy Scouts have laws: A SCOUT IS... Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave,

Clean, and Reverent. Boy Scouts take the laws very seriously and complete specific tasks to earn badges in each of the areas.

In keeping with the reverence law, the Boy Scouts provided 145 chaplains at the Jamboree, representing 19 religious denominations. Among the Rabbis serving the Jewish scouts were Chabadnickim: Pinny Gniwisch of Montreal, Sholomo Goldfarb from Maalot, Israel, and Shmuly Gutnick from Montgomery Street, Crown Heights.

WHEN HATRED IS ELIMINATED...THE EXILE IS AUTOMATICALLY ENDED

The way to transform the fasts (undesirable events of the period of Bein HaMetzarim) to joy and gladness is through conduct in the manner of Ahavas Yisroel and unity between Jews.

The reason for this is because the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of hatred without cause between Jews. When the hatred is eliminated, the cause for the exile is eliminated – and thus the effect, the exile itself, is automatically ended.

Sicha of the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, Shabbos Parshas Mattos-Massai 5743

Acharon acharon choviv. The very final one is distinctive. The 12th and final scout law says that a scout is reverent. Scouts define reverence as practicing one's religion and respecting other religions. In keeping with this law, the Boy Scouts did a phenomenal job of providing the 120 members of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent with all their needs to participate in the Jamboree without compromising on Shabbos, Kashrus, Davening, learning or the Nine Days, including Tisha B'Av. There was one point at which there was a clash of interest, involving President Bush, but Hashem took care of that.

Of all the religious denominations only the Shomer Shabbat Contingent needed a place to conduct daily services. A special circus tent was provided, because the usual army tents would not be large enough. A state-of-the-art Eiruv was erected around the

Shul Tent and the area where the Contingent pitched their personal tents. A global positioning system with a satellite navigating device was used by the US Army to position the Shul Tent in the direction of Yerushalayim.

The Kosher food was a tremendous feat. Chalav Yisroel and Pas Yisroel were respected and there was a special menu offered for the Nine Days, for those who did not eat meat. There were two non-Jewish volunteers who hung around all Shabbos making themselves available to ensure that the Jews would celebrate their Shabbos the way Jews should. "It was great to see "Chassidei umos ha'olam" working to advance our cause as observant Jews," said Pinny.

The Jewish scouts and scoutmasters who were not part of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent were scattered among various troops in locations across the 15,000 acre Jamboree

campsite. The entire first week, Pinny, Shlomo and Shmuly were 'scouting' for the Jews who were dispersed and gather them together for Shabbos.

All week, Jewish awareness was increasing at the Jamboree. Hundreds of Jewish scouts and scoutmasters were putting on T'fillin, some for the first time since their bar mitzvah and some for the first time in their life.

Thursday morning at 7 a.m. in the Shul Tent of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent, scouts, scoutmasters and Boy Scout dignitaries congregated for the Bar Mitzvah ceremony of 15-year-old Michael Steen from S. Diego, CA. Steen had put on t'fillin for the first time two days before. When asked why he did not have a Bar Mitzvah at age 13, he answered, "When my parents called the synagogue a few months before I was 13 they said there was not enough time for me to prepare, so I went without."



Aron, Shmuly and Pinny surrounded by 'happy campers' who have just made their own Shofars to take home for Rosh HaShana.

At the Jamboree he prepared from Tuesday to Thursday.

When asked what made him decide to have a Bar Mitzvah now, he answered quite simply, "Rabbi Shmuly!"

Shabbos was approaching. Shlomo realized that the Shul Tent of 40 by 60 feet would not be big enough for the boys of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent plus the expected guests, the Jewish scouts he and the other two chaplains had been meeting all week. He managed to put up two extra tents. The smaller tents would house the traditional Shabbos services and the bigger Shul Tent would hold the beginner's minyan.

In another subsection of the Jamboree there would be an egalitarian-style Jewish service. Concerned about the scouts who would be attending there, Shlomo arranged to make Shabbos kits for them. Under Shlomo's guidance, boys from the Shomer Shabbat Contingent were learning about Ahavas Yisroel, Chabad style, as they packed kits of a small bottle of grape juice, 2 chalila rolls, instructions on how to make Kiddush, a Yarmulka, a napkin and the Kiddush prayer in Hebrew and English with transliteration. The kits were sponsored by the National Jewish Committee on Scouting.

The Tzivos Hashem team was scheduled to arrive for Shabbos so they would be on location for their Sunday morning Jewish Craft Workshops presentation. In the Tzivos Hashem team were: Shneur Fridman, Aron Rabin, Yosef Cohen, Menachem Forst, Yudi Simon, Michael Albuherk and Tzivos Hashem soldiers Meir and Mendy Albuherk. When they arrived at the gate, they discovered that their special passes to the campgrounds had not been issued. It caused a delay, but was taken care of in time for Shabbos.

Behind the scenes trouble was brewing. All week long, at the exhibit of the National Jewish Committee of Scouting, Shmuly had been putting

T'fillin on boys and giving them Yarmulkes to decorate. If a boy wasn't Jewish, Shmuly offered him a Yarmulka, but told him that T'fillin were not appropriate for him. On Friday morning, one of the boys who was told that T'fillin was not for him ran to inform his Jewish father that he was not Jewish because his mother was not Jewish. The father, holder of a high position in the Boy Scout hierarchy, was not pleased and wanted Shmuly 'out.' To some it looked like Shmuly would have to leave the grounds after Shabbos.

Shmuly knew that scouts have the right to state their religious beliefs and that is what he had done. It did not matter how 'high up' that kid's father was in the scout hierarchy; Shmuly knew how 'high up' his boss is.

Shabbos arrived. "Friday night service was very exciting," described Pinny. "We had 370 people packed into the tent and they were all excited and they all had fun. To see people in shul

who usually go only on Yom Kippur standing on chairs singing 'Am Yisroel Chai' and then dancing together around the tent – gave me the chills. On Shabbos morning many of those people came back and witnessed the bar mitzvah of a 54-year-old Methodist, who said that his mother wanted him to have one (his mother married a non-Jew and their son grew up as a Methodist). During his aliya he started to cry, and that led to everyone shedding a tear of joy for our new bar mitzvah boy."

Shabbos was beautiful in all ways – the gashmiyus, the ruchniyus and the achdus. The scoutmasters of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent were concerned that the scouts would have to drink on Tisha B'Av, since temperatures had been unusually high all week and were expected to remain so. The scoutmasters did not want to take any chances with the health of the boys.

On Motzaei Shabbos the crowd



The team that overcame all the difficulties to convert the fast day to joy by acts of Ahavas Yisroel. Left to right, back row: Yosef Cohen, Aron Rabin, Shneur Fridman, Chanina Szendro (from Ner Yisroel), Michael Albuherk, Menachem Forst. Front Row: Yudi Simon, Shmuly Gutnick, Pinny Gniwisch, Meir Albuherk and Shlomo Goldfarb. Insert: Mendy Albuherk.

appeared again for *Eicha*. Scouts who had never before heard of Tisha B'Av before were taking off their shoes and sitting on the ground. The boys from the Shomer Shabbat Contingent led the congregation in the reading of *Eicha*.

Sunday morning dawned. The temperature had plummeted overnight and there was a torrential downpour. Rain is always a bracha, and this time it was a revealed bracha. The Tzivos Hashem team was committed to making a fabulous presentation, but they had expected to have to do it while fasting in the Virginia mid-summer heat. Now the fasting would be easier and they would have more strength. No longer did the scoutmasters of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent have to fear dehydration and having to instruct their scouts to drink

Zero hour. A decision had to be reached if Shmuly could remain on campgrounds. All the evidence had been presented and the positions heard. Judgment was passed: Shmuly was 'in.

During every Jamboree, regular activities are suspended on Sunday mornings so that scouts can practice being reverent by attending services. "At past Jamborees the Jewish boys would be idle on Sunday mornings, or would accompany their friends to services of other religions," admits Jay Schnapp, Chairman Sub-Committee on 2001 Jamboree. "For the last three Jamborees, Tzivos Hashem, has been invited to make a Sunday morning Traditions Program for Jewish Scouts. It has turned out to be a well attended and very successful program."

Tzivos Hashem was ready to set up, but the tent that was designated for the program was too small. And by now it was totally flooded. By Hashgacha Pratis, there was a large building in the vicinity that had a smaller group scheduled for the morning. The smaller group graciously moved aside and the Jewish traditions program moved indoors.

The Tzivos Hashem team got to



Fifteen-year-old Michael, atop of Shmuly Gutnick, at his Bar Mitzvah celebration in the Shul Tent in subcamp five of the National Boy Scouts Jamboree 2001.

work. There was a lot of setting up to do. Meanwhile the building was filling up with hundreds of Jewish scouts. The preliminaries began. A few words were said about Tisha B'Av and a few announcements were made.

The impromptu building had a stage, which turned out to be a great asset for the next part of the program, an original play called The Western Wall, written by Liebel Estrin of Mendy and the Golem. (A preliminary version of the play was distributed at STAFFWEEK.) The play was about the Bais HaMikdosh and Ahavas Yisroel. The week before, the script had been given to 16-year-old scout, Benjy Gabler, of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent. Benjy cast the parts and directed the play, which delivered a powerful message of brotherly love in an entertaining format. The play came to a crescendo with the call of the Great Shofar and revelation of Moshiach, bringing the audience to its feet in a standing ovation for the play, and in anxious anticipation of the Final Redemption.

Then started the workshops and other parts of the program. There was The Shofar Factory and The Havdala

Candle and Besamim Workshop. There was a large replica of the Western Wall, next to which the scouts could get their picture taken either giving Tzedakah, for the younger boys, or putting on T'fillin. Scouts were in deep concentration as they bent over their personal heartfelt letters to G-d that would be taken to the real Western Wall in Yerushalayim. Pennies were available for boys to purchase a letter in the Seifer Torah being written in the memory of Rabbi Marlow. It was touching to see that many of the boys contributed their own money, way beyond the penny.

The scouts were lining up to have a private conversation with Rabbi Pinny. "I had great interactions with the boys. I got many comments about the Shabbos service and how they loved the fact that we had an English service with a mechitza," he said. "I had many encounters where kids expressed their excitement on their newly found Jewish spark that was ignited at the Jamboree."

The entire program was a success. Everyone was impressed by the teamwork of Tzivos Hashem. Each of the young men who came worked diligently at his own job and offered



Everyone gets in on the act. After a week of witnessing the Chabadnikim putting T'fillin on others, those who know how to put on T'fillin assist those who are totally new to it. A major breakthrough in Mivtza T'fillin.



Not familiar with Tisha B'Av, a boy scout participates in the Motzaei Shabbos reading of Eicha by taking off his shoes and is sitting on the ground.

assistance to the others if needed. "Everything fit together perfectly like a puzzle," observed photographer Yaakov Rosenthal, who had come along to capture the day in pictures.

There was one more part to the program. A very unique part. Scouts were crowding around the tables where someone would put T'fillin on them and help them with the Brachas. The ones helping were boys from the Shomer Shabbat Contingent. Totally unfamiliar with the idea of helping others put on T'fillin, these boys had been witnessing Shmuly, Shlomo and Pinny putting T'fillin on every Jew they met the entire week. The concept had sunk in. Additionally, there were boys helping with Mivtza T'fillin who themselves did not yet put on T'fillin regularly.

The Achdus was incredible. Inspired by the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, the chaplains and Tzivos

Hashem brought together the Jewish boys from the Jamboree from all different states, from all different backgrounds, helping one another, enjoying one another and strengthening each other's Jewish identity. And by doing so, they were **"transforming the fast day to joy and gladness... through conduct in the manner of Ahavas Yisroel and unity between Jews."**

"...the second Beis HaMikdash was

destroyed because of hatred without cause between Jews. When the hatred is eliminated, the cause for the exile is eliminated – and thus the effect, the exile itself, is automatically ended." To Hashem we pray that in the merit of the Rebbe, who inspires us to do deeds of Ahavas Yisroel and to bring Jews together, that we merit the Final Redemption immediately with our Righteous Redeemer, Mamosh.

ONE LAST TEST

The scouts of the Shomer Shabbat Contingent had a very tough choice to make on Tisha B'Av. In the late afternoon and evening there was to be an arena show with music and fireworks. The highlight of the show would be a military plane performance and a helicopter bringing President Bush for a guest appearance. The boys in the Shomer Shabbat Contingent represented different levels of Yiddishkeit, but even the ones who were totally observant were having a problem with not going to see the president.

In the end, the One who gave the test took away the test. The rain continued all day without letting up. The President was forced to cancel his appearance. The show was postponed until the next evening, well past midday of the tenth of Av.