

# NEWS

LIVING WITH MOSHIACH AROUND THE WORLD

## A BUSY SUMMER FOR ASCENT OF TZFAS

Despite the precarious security situation in Eretz Yisroel and the precipitous drop in tourism, Ascent was busy with tourists throughout the summer.

Since the founding of Ascent eighteen years ago, the summer has always been an extremely busy time at the institution, as a result of being geared primarily towards tourists and students. This is when the English division of Ascent, directed by Rabbi Mordechai Ziv, hums with activity.

"This year we were concerned, because of the drop in tourism," said Rabbi Ayal Reiss who directs

Ascent's publicity, "but *baruch Hashem*, we saw a significant increase in the quality and quantity of our

educational programs." A number of factors contributed to this: tourists and students fearing to remain in Yerushalayim, Ascent's reputation, successful advertising and public relations, a recently worked out relationship with the Ministry of Tourism and tourist agencies, and especially the cooperation of *shluchim* around the world.

This summer, as every summer, Ascent's staff benefited from the contribution of *shluchim* who contributed their energy and talents to the intensive work with the large number of guests. Rabbi Shlomo



Rabbi Yonason Denenbaum, *shliach* in Palm Springs, California with a Birthright group at Ascent

Schwartz and his wife came from the Chai Center in Los Angeles for the first half of the summer, and during the latter half of the summer, Rabbi Meir Levinger and his wife, from Maayonot, joined Ascent's staff.

In order to be able to devote personal attention to all comers, there were also additional *madrichim* and *madrichot*.

"In addition to the seminars, which were attended by many students, we also saw an increase of organized groups," says Rabbi Ziv. "We hosted hundreds of guests from Birthright and Maayonot, and *shluchim* came with groups of their *mekuravim* from New York, California, Detroit, and Toronto."

There were also groups of young people from non-Chassidic yeshivos like Aish HaTorah, Ohr Somayach, Schapelles, and others who enjoyed the Chassidic programs.



Rabbi Shlomo Schwartz at the "Ask the Rabbi" stand

There were special programs for women, such as concerts and workshops on personal growth. The high point of the summer programming was during the Klezmer Festival, which continues throughout the night until the morning with *farbrengens* with the Ascent staff, along with Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, *mashpia* of Ohr Tmimim, who *farbrenge*d with many guests.

Ascent set up an "Ask the Rabbi" stand in the artists' colony. Those who manned the stand said that each day curious passersby asked them questions about Judaism, and got into long conversations with them.

"To sum it up," says Rabbi Ziv, "we feel the Rebbe's *bracha* at Ascent. Through *avoda* with *simcha* and a connection to *pnimiyus ha'Torah*, we see success in the *shlichus* and the realization of the Rebbe's *brachos*."

## FIRST YEAR TEEN CAMP – BIG SUCCESS

Camp Chayolos Beis Dovid had a successful summer camp. The activities and program were geared for girls from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades and directed by Mrs. Miriam Notik. The camp was situated in the Eastern Townships, Canada on 70 acres of scenic grounds. The girls enjoyed the swimming pool, trips, special days, and most important, the *Chassidische* atmosphere that permeated their daily schedule.

Rabbi Eli Serebyanski and his wife Chanie, from Toronto, Canada, did an incredible job as learning directors.

Rabbi Serebyanski taught an assortment of subjects in an interesting manner. Subjects included were: *parsha*, *halacha*, *toldos Chabad*, *inyanei Geula u'Moshiach*, and *shleimus ha'Aretz*. They kept the girls on their toes throughout the day with fun quizzes and puzzles.

*Shnas HaMeia* was celebrated in a special way. The girls were encouraged to learn *Tanya b'al peh* and to see how many sections of 100 lines of *Tanya* they can learn. *Baruch Hashem*, the girls did an amazing job. Every single girl participated, and together they learned

close to seven section of *Tanya* by heart. A feat to be proud of!

"Surely the Rebbe MH"Ms constant encouragement throughout the preparations for, and during the summer program, ensured its success. I felt that the Rebbe was constantly urging me to continue despite any problems or hardships that came up. As usual, the Rebbe's *brachos* were fulfilled to the utmost. The campers and their parents were very pleased with the program," Mrs. Miriam Notik thankfully expressed.

# SHLUCHIM IN YEHUDA AND SHOMRON HOLD EMERGENCY MEETING

Due to the unbearable situation in the Yehuda-Shomron area, the directors of the Chabad Houses there convened at the offices of Merkaz Tzeirei Chabad in Kfar Chabad in order to come up with ideas of how to go about their work effectively in the face of the trying circumstances.

The participating *shluchim* were Rabbi Victor Ettia of Kiryat Arba; Rabbi Yosef Nachshon of Kiryat Arba; Rabbi Yehuda Rubin of Lev HaShomron; Rabbi Nissan Nachshon of Efrat; Rabbi Yitzchok Cohen of Karmeit Tzur and Alon Shvut; Rabbi Raffi Solomon of Matteh Binyanim, and Rabbi Shmuel Vinokrat of Chevel Yericho.

Each *shliach* described the difficulties he has to contend with. People are limiting their travel outside their *yishuvim* because of terrorism on the roads. This makes it hard to hold joint activities with *yishuvim*, as was done in the past.

Many suggestions for new approaches were discussed, such as having a special camp for children of Yehuda-Shomron in the center of the country on Chanuka, and creating portable booths to be connected to cars which will be used as *mitzva* tanks, each booth having a library that will go from

*yishuv* to *yishuv*, particularly those *yishuvim* that are virtually cut off due to the danger in traveling there. Even when the *mitzva* tanks would not be in use, they would be ready for times when roads are closed off due to security problems, like

the closed-off area, where generally cars and buses are stuck for hours. They would have *s'farim* and literature along with the proper lighting, hot and cold drinks, etc. This way those forced to wait would get both their physical and spiritual needs taken care of.

Along these lines, mobile *sukkos* are planned for Sukkos so that even residents living in cut-off *yishuvim* would be able to fulfill the *mitzvos* of *netilas lulav* and *sukka*.

The *shluchim* expressed the hope that *Anash* will support these projects, for each tank costs \$3,000!

The need to protest was also discussed. The participants expressed their bitterness over the fact that official Chabad spokespeople are doing nothing to strongly express their disapproval over the terrible handling of the security situation. They declared their amazement that despite the Rebbe's instructions to protest regarding *shleimus ha'Aretz*, nothing is being done.

The *shluchim* left the meeting with renewed strength in light of the important decisions that were made to increase their work in the Yehuda-Shomron area.



Directors of Chabad houses in Yehuda – Shomron at emergency meeting



shootings, bombs, etc. Whenever security forces close off traffic as a result of these incidents, somebody from a Chabad House will drive these portable Chabad Houses to

# R' SHMUEL DOVID GURKOV, A'H

R' Shmuel Dovid Gurkov passed away on 14 Elul after a protracted illness. Rabbi Gurkov was born in Charkov on 18 Tammuz 5692 (1932). In his youth he learned in an underground *yeshiva*, and when World War II began he went to Samarkand with his family. There he learned with R' Eliyahu Chaim Roitblatt, a'h, and then with R' Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin. His special talents were already apparent when he was a child, for he learned large portions of Tanach by heart.

After the war, when many Lubavitcher families took the opportunity to leave Russia, the Gurkovs were among them. After wandering to various places, they arrived in Brunoy, France, where R' Shmuel Dovid devoted himself to learning *nigleh* and Chassidus for three years in Tomchei Tmimim. At this time he learned all fifty-three chapters of *Likkutei Amarim - Tanya* by heart, which remained ingrained in his memory all through his life.

Rabbi Gurkov's friends relate that once before Pesach there was nobody in Brunoy to make a *siyum*. Rabbi Gurkov, as an oldest child, sat down and learned and completed the tractate *Megilla* that night and made a *siyum* the next morning.

Rabbi Gurkov also knew a number of languages. When he arrived in France he learned French within a few weeks.

Rabbi Gurkov traveled with his family to England, where his father served as a *shliach* to the Rebbeim. His

father sent him to Manchester to learn from R' Yitzchok Dubov, a'h.

In 5712 Rabbi Gurkov went to the Rebbe MH" M and learned in 770 for a few years, receiving *smicha* in 5716. He married in 5718 and taught in various schools in Rhode Island and Newark. In 5731 he settled in Highland Park, New Jersey, where he devoted himself to *chinuch*.

Despite Rabbi Gurkov's outstanding talents and his mastery of large portions of *nigleh*, Chassidus, and *halacha*, he conducted himself humbly. He gave classes in *nigleh* and Chassidus.

An *eiruv* was made in Highland Park a number of years ago, and Rabbi Gurkov wrote a lengthy *t'shuva* illustrating how the *eiruv* was made improperly. He sent the *t'shuva* to various *rabbanim*, who accepted his position, and the *eiruv* was fixed.

When Russian Jews came to Highland Park, he gave classes in Russian for them and invited them to his Shabbos table.

Rabbi Gurkov fell ill a year ago and accepted his suffering silently, trying not to let his treatments interfere with his teaching. At his funeral, Rabbi Eliezer Kaminetzky, *rav* of the *shul* where he *davened*, said that with his special talents and fine character he captivated the entire city.

Rabbi Gurkov is survived by his mother, his wife, and sons and daughters who serve as *shluchim* of the Rebbe MH" M.



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