

PRINTING TANYA IN THAILAND

THREE COUNTRIES RECENTLY JOINED THE LIST: VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, AND LAOS. *
A PAIR OF ENERGETIC T'MIMIM PRINTED THE TANYA IN THAILAND
AND NEARBY COUNTRIES.

BY AVROHOM JACOBSON

“We arrived in Patia, a typical Thai town which is a two-hour trip from the capitol in Bangkok, on a day that really wasn't good as far as we were concerned. It was a Thai holiday and all businesses were closed. We wandered around for hours attempting to find a store that made copies, until finally, by incredible *hashgacha pratis*, we met a local Jew. He took us to a place where we could make copies.

“After we printed the first pages, we had the workers there take over and we went with the Jew to a senior citizens' home, where there was an old Jew from the previous generation. I can't begin to describe how moved he was at the sight of two *bachurim* with such an obvious Jewish appearance. When we put *t'fillin* on him, the first time in many years for him, he burst into tears. We learned with both of them the chapters of *Tanya* we printed, and emotions continued to run high. The Jewish spark had been ignited, and the local Jew promised us that if we were ever interested in starting

ongoing activities there, he would finance it. We parted from him, promising to follow up on the offer as soon as possible.”

This episode is only part of the adventures Gavriel Holtzberg and Menachem Asher Turkov, students in the *smicha* program at the Chabad House in Thailand, experienced doing outreach there. Their objective: to print the *Tanya* in any city where Jews live. Their accomplishment: the *Tanya* printed in 8 exotic new places.

The idea came up last summer at a *farbrengen* at the *chanukas ha'bayis* of the new Chabad House of Thailand. The *shluchim* discussed which activities had not yet been done to prepare the world for Moshiach. Somebody proposed printing the *Tanya* where it hadn't yet been printed, for the Rebbe said the *Tanya* should be printed in every city where Jews live.

There were some nearby countries where the *Tanya* had never been printed. None of them have an

organized Jewish community, but a few Jews live there. In consultation with Rabbi Sholom Jacobson, who was heavily involved in the *Tanya* printing project, they learned that *Tanyas* should be printed even in areas where no Jews live, but where Jewish tourists visit year-round.

It was decided that the *Tanya* should be printed in places that met these criteria. Rabbi Kantor designated money for the project, and the boys took off.

Holtzberg and Turkov took along galleys of *Tanya* ready for printing. Patia was the first stop, an encounter that bore fruit, leading to the establishment of ongoing Chabad activity in that city with the arrival of ten *T'mimim*, supported by the Jew whom Holtzberg and Turkov had met.

Their next destination was Cambodia, a two-hour flight from Thailand. Only two Jews live there! But just that day they weren't to be found. The *T'mimim* had to make all the arrangements by themselves for



Gavriel Holtzberg and Menachem Asher Turkov learning *Tanya* with two Israelis

the printing. Cambodia is a Third World country – even in the capitol city, Phnom Penh, not all the streets are paved. Since the *Tanya* is printed on sheets that are not the standard size, the *bachurim* wouldn't take a chance on finding the paper they needed; they brought it with them in their luggage. Just finding a machine with enough ink to print what they needed was challenging enough.

Here too, after finding a copy center and even printing some sheets, they left instructions with the workers and went to the largest tourist attractions of the city, the palace and museum (which memorializes the uprising of 1975), where they found dozens of Israelis

with whom they learned the newly printed *Tanya*.

They had arrived in Cambodia in the morning. By evening the entire *Tanya* was printed, and they resumed their journey back to Thailand on their way to their next stop.

Holtzberg's and Turkov's next trip took a week's time and covered three cities: two in Vietnam and one in Laos. The large amounts of paper and food made their luggage surpass the permitted weight, and they had to carry the paper on their shoulders onto the plane so as to not to be charged.

They arrived in Ho Chi Minh City a week before Rosh HaShana. There

is no Jewish community there and no ongoing Chabad activity. *T'mimim* go there intermittently on *Merkas shlichus*, and over time they had compiled a list of Jews who live there. Despite the list, Holtzberg and Turkov couldn't organize a *minyán* for Rosh HaShana. They went to the homes of some local Jews and learned from the *Tanya* they printed that day.

Their next destination was the capitol city, Hanoi. They contacted the Israeli Consul and asked for a meeting with the ambassador. They were told that the security situation didn't allow that, but the boys decided to show up in a *l'chatchila aribber way*.



A freshly printed galley of *Tanya*, somewhere in Cambodia



About to board the plane with large amounts of paper

After undergoing extensive security checks, Holtzberg and Turkow did indeed meet the ambassador, who had just finished his job that day and was completing the transition with his replacement. The *T'mimim* learned Chapter 32 with both of them and blew the *shofar*. The ambassadors were very moved. The second ambassador asked for the address of the nearest Chabad House so he could refer Israeli tourists who might be interested in Judaism.

The next day the *bachurim* went to Vientiane, the capitol of Laos. They learned that two Jews had recently opened a business there. They also met Israeli tourists in a restaurant, and learned *Tanya* with them from the freshly printed pages. There was no resting at night. In their motel lobby they discovered groups of Israelis with whom they *farbrenge*d, learned *Tanya*, and spoke

about Moshiach. At the end of the *farbrenge*n we gave each of them a copy of the new *Tanya*.

Then the *bachurim* returned to Kosmoi, Thailand, where there are thousands of Israeli tourists. Although they showed up two days before Rosh HaShana, they advertised about the Rosh HaShana *davening* and meals with Chabad. A restaurant they rented for this purpose filled up with dozens of Israelis. Between *t'fillos*, the *bachurim* went through the city blowing the *shofar*. They distributed the *Tanya* printed there before Rosh HaShana to those who participated in the *davening*, and after *davening* they taught a *Tanya* class.

After a brief rest at the Chabad House in Bangkok, the two continued to plug away, this time in Chang-Mai, where Rabbi Yitzchok Weber, head of the *smicha* program, has programs every Shabbos. The

boys printed the *Tanya* in the offices of a diamond business owned by an Israeli, and they held a class with four Jewish employees. Rabbi Weber came for Shabbos, during which there were many *Tanya* classes.

The last stop was Puket. It was a particularly rainy day and the streets were flooded. It was with great difficulty that they managed to find a place to print the *Tanya*. They found an Israeli restaurant half an hour away from the printer, where they learned with the owner and tourists.

After concluding this special project, the two *T'mimim* went back to the source, to 770, where they told me about their adventures and showed me the pictures demonstrating how the wellsprings of Chassidus have reached literally every corner of the world! The only question is: "*Eimasi kaasi mar?*" When are you coming, Master [i.e., Melech HaMoshiach]?