**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Nasso 5775**

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**Miracle on East 69th Street**

**By Mindy Lankry**

In one minute everything changed; my whole perspective on life, my security, my carefree attitude. It was Wednesday, April 21, 2010 at 5:21 P.M. and it was the minute my little girl was hit by a car. It was a minute I will never forget, one that replays in my mind many times a day.

The sky was blue the air clear and warm, spring after a long cold winter. The kids took advantage and rode Batya’s new scooter for the very first time. I could hear their shouts of glee through the open window, watched as Meira’s hair whipped in the wind her head thrown back with infectious giggles as Batya gave her a ride up and down the sidewalk.

**The Hour Was Getting Late**

She waited, as patiently as her four year old body could, as Shlomo also got a ride from his sister, and then it was her turn again and she bubbled with laughter as she held on tightly and zipped down the sidewalk. The hour was getting late; I went to interrupt the fun so we could do all the boring stuff, like homework, and dinner.

I stepped out onto the platform on top of my steps, that little space that became the balcony to the gruesome show that would play over many more times in my head. I called out “kids, it’s time to come inside now” and little Meira, so pleased to see me, so eager to listen, so obedient, just jumped off the sidewalk and ran across East 69th street.

“STOP!! STOP” I am screaming and then a silver jeep hit my baby. Her hot pink sweater a blur of color as her tiny body flew up in the air and landed in a crumpled ball, a motionless rag doll.

“NNNOOOOO “ a scream, an unearthly roar of horrific pain tore from my throat as I ran to the crumpled little figure lying on the ground. I thought her life was over, and so was mine. A strange thought came speeding through my brain; “I would rather lose our job than lose our child”

Somehow I am sitting on the black pavement and the motionless limp body of my baby is in my arms. In some conscience part of my brain I realize that I picked her up and that was the wrong thing to do, so I begin to lower her to the ground carefully and she stirs and begins to cry.

**The Sounds are Distant and Muffled**

I cry too, I have never been so happy to hear her cry. My husband is sitting on the ground next to me, my children standing around us and hundreds of New Yorkers fill the sidewalk and street watching the drama unfold. The police arrive along with the ambulance and fire trucks. There is chaos, people calling commands and advice to me, but I cannot hear, the sounds are distant and muffled.

I know I will never ever be alright if something should happen to my little girl. Please don’t let her die, I sob inwardly to Hashem, please don’t let us die. They try to put her on a board but she squirms, cries and refuses. Someone calls out, “she will be OK”. How can they know? Only five minutes ago she was OK. How can we know anything?

The driver is crying and apologizing, I tell him it’s not his fault, but look at the silver machine a hundred times the size of the little body in my arms and start to shake. We get her in the ambulance she is crying bitterly and telling me she is OK and wants to go home. She sounds like herself; she never wants to go to the doctor and always tries to minimize her pain.

**“Mommy, I Scared”**

I hold her hand and promise not to leave her for even a second. Her head is bleeding, bumps are forming but she looks at me with pain fogged eyes and says “Mommy, I scared”. I hold her little fragile hand and promise again that I will be with her the whole time and everything will be OK. I can’t believe she is talking, and making sense.

A whole team meets us as the ambulance doors open and she is wheeled quickly inside and evaluated. There are big bumps on the head and a scrape on the back, but no other outer signs of injury. She is rushed for a cat scan and x-rays and I am by her side just as I promised.

The doctors surround her bed and recheck her again. She is resting calmly now and they are baffled. They prepare her for IV and possible surgery as they await the results of the test. The results come in and they are even more puzzled. There is no internal bleeding, no brain damage, not even one broken bone. Just a concussion, perhaps a hairline fracture of the skull, but there is nothing that needs to be done. No surgery, no stitches, no casts, nothing.

**Doctors Recognize that**

**Someone Upstairs is Watching**

My tiny little girl weighing 22 pounds is whole and unbroken after being hit by a 5000 pound SUV! The doctors are amazed, “You have Someone upstairs watching over her” one says, “what a fantastic miracle, we have patients with greater injuries from falling off their bikes”

And so after seven hours of observation, at 1:00 am, we take her home. My little girl in one piece is in my bed with me and as she softly sleeps my tears flow as I try to grasp this awesome miracle that Hashem has performed for us. I am overwhelmed with gratitude, I can’t even comprehend how I can ever repay this gift, this miracle. I am so indebted to Hashem I cannot fathom where to begin to express my gratitude and love to Him.

But I know with certainty I can never live my life the same. I will never see things as I have before. I can never take for granted each day, each child, each gift He has given me.

**Just Takes One Moment for a**

**Life to Be Altered Drastically**

It has taken some days as I walked around like a zombie reliving those terrifying moments of uncertainty, seeing the bouncing giggling girl in pink, and her sudden crumpled body on the floor. It takes just one moment and life can be altered so drastically. We get bogged down with details of life and things to be done that we lose sight of the big picture until in one flashing moment it’s changed. And we wonder why we didn’t treasure it before. Why we didn’t realize what we had? Take advantage of your gifts in life and may we never need a miracle. Miracles are happening to all of us all the time. We just need to open our eyes and see!

*Reprinted from last week’s email from “Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace,” edited by David Bibi. The article originally appeared in the Shabuot 2010 issue of “Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace,” still as thought provoking as when originally published.*

**Jewish Naval Academy Student in Amtrak Derailment Given**

**Full Military Honors at Funeral**

[](http://www.jta.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/justin-zemser2.jpg)**Midshipmen from the U.S Naval Academy carry Midshipman Justin Zemser to a waiting car after his funeral on May 15, 2015 in Hewlett, New York. (Kena Betancur/Getty Images)**

NEW YORK (JTA) — A Jewish 20-year-old sophomore at the U.S. Naval Academy who was killed in Tuesday’s Amtrak train derailment in Philadelphia was given full military honors at his funeral, which was attended by 160 Navy midshipmen.

The funeral for Justin Zemser of Rockaway, Queens, who aspired to be a Navy SEAL, was held at the Boulevard-Riverside-Hewlett chapel on Long Island Friday morning. Zemser’s commanding officer Capt. Brady Soublet [called](http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Justin-Zemser-Amtrak-Derailment-Death-Naval-Academy-Cadet-Queens-Rockaway-303786911.html) the sophomore a “phenomenal young man” at the ceremony, which featured a bugler and a naval burial detail, the [Baltimore Sun](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/anne-arundel/annapolis/bs-md-zemser-funeral-advance-0516-20150515-story.html) reported.

The naval academy’s Jewish chaplain, Lt. Yonatan Warren, served as burial rabbi.

Zemser, who was one of eight passengers killed aboard a northbound Amtrak train that derailed and injured dozens of passengers, was vice president of the naval academy’s Jewish Midshipmen Club and a wide receiver on the school’s sprint football team.

He was a popular student who was lauded as mature and intelligent by friends, family and naval academy colleagues, NBC New York reported, and was en route to his home in Queens on Tuesday night.

“He was the captain. He was the kid. He was basically like the face of Rockaway,” [said](http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Justin-Zemser-Amtrak-Derailment-Death-Naval-Academy-Cadet-Queens-Rockaway-303786911.html) Frank Kalnberg, Zemser’s friend and football teammate at Beach Channel High School in Rockaway Park, Queens for three years.

The [funeral](http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/amtrak-crash-victim-rachel-jacobs-buried-michigan-article-1.2222331) for Jewish 39-year-old Rachel Jacobs, a start-up CEO who was also killed in the crash, was set for Monday in her hometown of Southfield, Michigan, a Detroit suburb. A memorial service for Jacobs, who lived in Manhattan with her husband and young son, will be held Saturday at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Manhattan.

*Reprinted from last week’s email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals) Update. The article was originally released by the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency on May 15, 2015.)*

**It Once Happened**

**Rabbi Akiva and**

**His Wife Rachel**

As Rachel lay on the coarse pallet of straw which now served as her bed she thought back to her life before Akiva. She had been a princess or almost so, the beloved daughter of the wealthy Ben Kalba Savua, and there was nothing she lacked, not the most beautiful dresses, nor the finest delicacies. But, she would not exchange her life with Akiva for even the most precious gem in the world. For her aspirations lay elsewhere - her husband would one day be a great Torah scholar. It didn't matter that her father cast her out of their home, or that people laughed at her and scorned her - she had no doubt that one day Akiva would be a leader in Israel.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Akiva rose to answer and saw on the threshold a man dressed in tatters. "Please, have pity on us. My wife has just given birth and I have no bed for her and the baby." Rachel leapt to her feet, looking helplessly around for something to give him. Sensing her confusion, he said, "Just a bit of straw would help a lot." She gathered a large pile of soft straw and handed it to the grateful man.

"You see, Rachel," whispered her husband, "they are even poorer than we are, but some day I will buy you a golden tiara engraved with scenes of Jerusalem, just like your friends wear." She smiled at him, happy with his loving thoughts.

The days went by and Rachel grew accustomed to her new status. Life was hard, but her thoughts never dwelt on the present; she waited for her dream of the future to be realized.

Akiva knew that his work was cut out for him. Forty years old, he was just now embarking on his education, just now beginning with the Hebrew alphabet. Was it possible for him to achieve the heights imagined by his wife? Akiva's thoughts were interrupted by an amazing sight, for there a bit to the side of the road was a huge rock with a large hole bored through the center. He stared at it wondering what kind of tool could have made the hole and for what purpose, when he noticed a small drop of water hitting the hole and then falling again into the depression.

He watched as the process repeated itself again and again. Then, he realized that the soft, pure drops had bored the hole in the hard rock. He had stumbled upon the answer to his unspoken question; if water could make a hole in solid rock, then surely the holy words of Torah could work their way into his willing heart, even at the age of forty.

The traits that Rachel had perceived in her shepherd husband matured and his learning advanced, until he reached the stage where he attracted his own students. He was actually acquiring fame as a teacher of Torah and a scholar in his own right. Rachel had encouraged him to go away and immerse himself in further learning; it was hard to believe that 24 long years had passed. Akiva the shepherd had become Rabbi Akiva, the teacher of 24,000 students, the greatest of his generation. And the time had finally come for his triumphant return to home and his wife.

The huge crowd thronged around Rabbi Akiva and his disciples. Suddenly a woman emerged from the crowd and reached for the hem of his coat which she kissed. The students surrounded her and attempted to chase her away, but their teacher reprimanded them: "She is my wife! Know that what is mine and what is yours is all hers!"

Also amongst those gathered to welcome the tzadik was Ben Kalba Savua, the father of Rachel. He had suffered the pangs of regret during the many years since he had driven his daughter from his home. Now, the arrival of the tzadik of the generation would give him an opportunity to learn how to right the terrible wrong he had done her. Rabbi Akiva graciously admitted the old man into his presence and listened while he related the story, not knowing that this was his own father-in-law. As the man's story unfolded, Akiva realized who he was.

"If you had known that the poor, ignorant shepherd would one day become a great scholar, would you have acted differently?" inquired Rabbi Akiva.

"I promise you, if I had thought that he would know even one Torah law, I would have permitted the marriage!"

"Then know, that I am that shepherd, and it is only through the merit of your daughter that I have achieved this position!"

Rabbi Akiva was able to nullify the vow Ben Kalba Savua rashly made so many years before. The old man, in his happiness, gave the couple half of his great wealth.

Their dream realized, Rachel and Akiva felt the old pain of separation diminish, overwhelmed by the new joy of their reunion. Rabbi Akiva hadn't forgotten the promise he made many years before - he had achieved greatness; and in addition to the crown of Torah, Rachel wore a golden crown of Jerusalem.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Emor 5775 edition of “L’Chaim Weekly,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.*

**With a Businessman’s Intensity**

Rabbi Meir said: Whoever occupies himself with [the study of Torah] for its own sake merits many things (Ethics, 6:1)

The Hebrew word for "occupies," "osek" relates to the word for "businessman," "baal esek." A person's occupation with the study of Torah must resemble a businessman's preoccupation with his commercial enterprise. Just as his attention is never totally diverted from his business, so too should the Torah always be the focus of our attention.

*(Likutei Sichot, Vol. XVII)*

*Reprinted from the Nasso 5774 edition of L’Chaim Weekly.*

**Orthodox Jewish Commencement Speaker Gets It Done**

***Don Greenberg, graduating from Binghamton University this year, pulls a "Sandy Koufax."***

**By RNS and Miriam Groner**



Don Greenberg pre-recording his Commencement Speech. RNS

Senior Don Greenberg was looking forward to addressing his fellow students as a commencement speaker at Binghamton University’s engineering school when his girlfriend broke the bad news: May 16, graduation day, falls on a Saturday.

“Great!” he remembers telling her, in the most sarcastic of tones.

A triple major from Teaneck, N.J., with a 3.93 GPA, Greenberg is an Orthodox Jew. Speaking into a microphone would not be considered kosher. Greenberg knew this, and his rabbi confirmed it.

But when 2,500 students and their families gather on the upstate New York campus for the Watson School of Engineering graduation on Saturday, Greenberg will still take his place at the podium. And on jumbo screens on either side of the stage, he will watch himself deliver the graduation address he taped in the university’s video studio three days earlier.

It is nearly the same speech he submitted weeks ago, about setting meaningful goals, which won him the honor of addressing his fellow graduates. Added more recently: an introduction in which he explains why he’s standing before them silently watching a video of himself addressing them.

“So, this is awkward,” his video begins. He goes on to explain how on Shabbat he must leave the workaday world behind and refrain, from cooking, driving and — the 22-year-old computer science major emphasized — “a microphone.”

“I am inexpressibly thankful to the school for going above and beyond to accommodate this central part of my life, and for ensuring that I could still deliver a meaningful speech to the Watson class of 2015,” he says, and then jokes:

“I know it will be meaningful, because I get as many tries as I want.”

When he first found out about the calendar conflict, Greenberg consulted his rabbi, the principal of his Jewish high school in the Bronx.

Rabbi Tully Harcsztark and other rabbis told him that it may be no problem to speak into an open mic, one that he did nothing to activate. But if his voice caused any other electronics to function — such as the lights on the sound board — that would conflict with Jewish law. Harcsztark advised Greenberg to speak to university officials to see if they could help.

Binghamton, part of the State University of New York, could solve the mic problem, but not the sound board issue. So Ryan Yarosh, director of media and publications, came up with the idea for Greenberg to record the speech on Wednesday (May 13), in front of the same podium that he would quietly stand before on Saturday.

Rabbi Aaron Slonim, the executive director of the Rohr Chabad Center for Jewish Student Life at Binghamton University — of which Greenberg is an active member — said it reminded him of the time Sandy Koufax (Major League Baseball pitcher) refused to pitch the first game in the 1965 World Series because it conflicted with Yom Kippur.

"Don's unwavering commitment to the Shabbat… is a source of great pride and strength to Jewish students here,” Slonim reportedly [said](http://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/2949339/jewish/Collegian-Finds-Inventive-Sandy-Koufax-Solution-for-Shabbat-Commencement-Speech.htm).

Greenberg is reportedly graduating with a triple major in computer science, math and management. He will begin his career in Manhattan in July.

Katharine Ellis, senior director of communications and a speech coach to the university’s  student commencement speakers, said she knew little about Orthodox Jewish practice until she met Greenberg, but that Binghamton was determined to do what it could to allow him to accept the honor he had earned.

Shabbat’s restrictions may be limiting  for many people, she said. “But it’s freeing for him.”

*Reprinted from the May 14, 2015 edition of The Jewish Week (New York.)*

**97 Years Later, Jewish WWI Vet**

**To Receive Medal of Honor**

**By Jim Salter (Associated Press)**

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ST. LOUIS (AP) -- Nearly a century after Sgt. William Shemin pulled wounded comrades to safety on a World War I battlefield, his heroism has finally earned him the nation's highest service medal.

The White House announced Thursday that President Barack Obama will award the Medal of Honor to two World War I soldiers - Shemin and Army Pvt. Henry Johnson. Shemin died in 1973, so his daughter, Elsie Shemin-Roth, in her mid-80s and from suburban St. Louis, will accept the medal in a ceremony at the White House on June 2.

Shemin-Roth did not respond to calls seeking comment Thursday. She said in an earlier interview that she worked for years to gather documents in support of her bid for the medal for her father, an honor she felt was previously denied because he was Jewish.

"Discrimination should never play a role when our country pays tribute to extraordinary acts of courage and selfless sacrifice," Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri said in a statement. "I couldn't be prouder that we were able to correct these past injustices, and that William Shemin and other Jewish heroes will get the recognition they deserve, and the national gratitude they earned."

**Shemin’s Battalion was Fighting in France**

Shemin was 19 in August 1918. His battalion was fighting in France. Americans were scattered over the battlefield.

"With the most utter disregard for his own safety, (Shemin) sprang from his position in his platoon trench, dashed out across the open in full sight of the Germans, who opened and maintained a furious burst of machine gun and rifle fire," according to one of Shemin's superiors, Capt. Rupert Purdon, who later wrote in support of a Medal of Honor.

The young sergeant took shrapnel while leading the platoon out of harm's way for the next three days. A German bullet pierced his helmet and lodged behind his left ear, landing Shemin in the hospital for three months and leaving him partly deaf. Shrapnel wounds eventually left him barely able to walk.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest military honor, but there was never an explanation of why he was denied the Medal of Honor. Shemin, who was from New York state, later earned a degree from Syracuse and started a greenhouse and nursery business in the Bronx.

**Campaigned for the Cause of**

**World War I Veterans**

In the early 2000s, Shemin-Roth learned of a law that reviewed cases of Jews who may have been denied medals they earned in World War II. She also learned there was no similar mechanism for World War I veterans, and set about to change that, prompting passage of a measure allowing review of records of Jewish World War I veterans who may have been discriminated against.

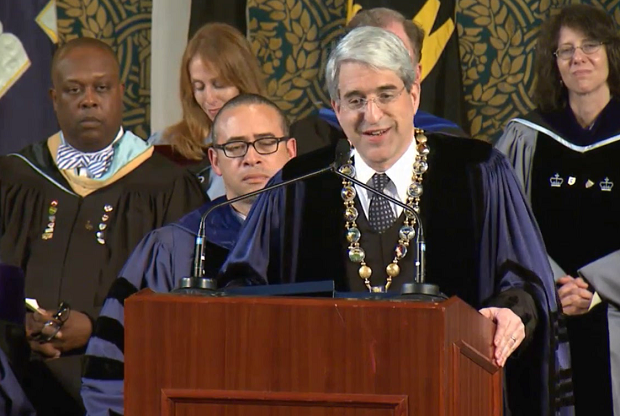
Johnson, of New York City, was part of an all-black National Guard unit ordered into battle. On May 15, 1918, Johnson and a fellow soldier were attacked by at least 12 German soldiers, according to the White House. Despite serious wounds, the two men fought back until the Germans retreated, while Johnson kept his badly wounded colleague from becoming a prisoner of war.

**Yale President Calls on Graduates**

**To Commit to Tikkun Olam**

***‘Your purpose in life … is simply this: to improve the world’***

**By Yair Rosenberg**



*Yale University President Peter Salovey addresses graduating seniors, May 16, 2015. (*[*YouTube*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYVxpWsMRnM)*)*

When Peter Salovey, a professor of psychology, became president of Yale University in 2013, the school paper quickly [noted](http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2012/11/27/singer-saloveys-rabbinic-legacy/) that he was a scion of the Soloveitchik family, the great Orthodox rabbinic dynasty that has shaped Europe, America, and Israel. Since assuming office, Salovey has embraced his heritage–from [outlining](http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2012/11/27/singer-saloveys-rabbinic-legacy/#comment-722142711) his full lineage for those interested in a comment at the *Yale Daily News*, to engaging in a [public dialogue](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u80Tuqrgr90) in March with former U.K. Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.

But perhaps the most Jewish moment of his presidency came this weekend at Yale’s graduation ceremonies, where Salovey repeatedly invoked the rabbinic tradition in exhorting students to commit themselves to “*tikkun olam*.”

In his Baccalaureate address to Yale’s graduating seniors, titled “[Repair the World!](http://president.yale.edu/BaccalureateAddress2015),” Salovey opened with a reference to the Mishnaic sage, Hillel the Elder. “A few weeks ago, I conducted a little thought experiment,” he said. “If a graduating senior asked me to capture the purpose of life after graduating from Yale in just a few words, what would I say? What would that purpose be? Could I articulate your life’s mission as you leave Yale–on commencement weekend, no less–while ‘standing on one foot’?”

“The phrase ‘standing on one foot,’” he went on, “derives from a story about Hillel, the first century BCE rabbi and scholar. He was asked to summarize the meaning of the entire Torah, the Old Testament, while standing on one foot. His reply: ‘What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation of this–go and study it!’”

Following Hillel, Salovey proceeded to outline his own philosophy of life on one foot. “There are many perfectly fine answers to the question about your commitments after Yale,” he continued. “What I am going to suggest to you today, however, is that your purpose in life as a graduate from Yale is simply this: to improve the world. In the Jewish tradition, this is called *tikkun olam*, literally to repair the world.”

Salovey then invoked another touchstone of the Jewish experience–humor. “*tikkun olam* is a theme and a phrase that has permeated American popular and political culture,” he noted. “American clergy–not to mention college deans and university presidents–tend to give so many sermons on *tikkun olam* that there is a joke about an American traveling to Israel to work in an orphanage. He is met by his cousin at the airport. After exchanging greetings, the American asks his Israeli cousin, ‘How do you say *tikkun olam* in Hebrew?’”

Salovey closed with a final reference to Jewish texts, this time to *Pirkei Avot*, the rabbinic moral tract. “Many of you have contributed something new by addressing niches where very little light has been shined,” he told the students. “But will these efforts be sustained after your graduation, or are they merely lines on your résumés? Will there be progress or back-sliding? Is *tikkun olam* ever actually finished? Is your work ever truly done?”

“Improving the world is a difficult project to take on because–unlike so many aspects of your education at Yale or of life itself–there really is no beginning, middle, or end here. There is no ‘bottom line.’ What may be most challenging is that even after a lifetime of work, further repair may be necessary. Maybe even more than when you started. My predecessor, President Richard Levin … often quoted Rabbi Tarfon, ‘It is not your responsibility to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.’”

It is hard to imagine the president of a prestigious university anywhere else in the world delivering such an unabashedly proud Jewish address. At a time when the headlines focus on anti-Israel activism shading into anti-Semitism on campus, it’s worth taking a step back and recognizing just how uniquely hospitable America has proven to its Jews and how far we have come.

*Reprinted from the May 20, 2015 email of Tablet Magazine.*

**Singapore, a Tiny**

**Heaven for Jews**

**By Ayelet Mamo Shay**

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These days, I am hectically working on my doctoral studies. My dissertation focuses on small Jewish communities around the world with less than 1,000 members. Ahead of every visit, I check, investigate, inquire and go through every piece of information which may assist me during my future visit to the community.

I am not ashamed to admit that when I began the initial inquiries ahead of my visit to the Jewish community of Singapore, my heart was filled with anxiety. Singapore’s “don’t do” list is long, terrifying and exhausting. I was particularly deterred by the enforcement and punishment: Dropping litter on the street is strictly forbidden, as is chewing gum in public. Even selling gum in grocery stores and supermarkets is highly restricted.

But all the anxieties disappeared as soon as I landed at Changi Airport on my way to mean Singapore’s tiny Jewish community.

A serious crisis took place in Singapore after World War II, and few Jews remained in the country: Only 150 out of several thousands, most of them Iraqi Jews from Baghdad, who lead the community to this very day. Since then, the community has grown significantly and numbers some 1,500 men and women today (including the Israelis and Jews who arrive for a short relocation period for business purposes).

  
**The Maghain Aboth Synagogue (Photo: Ayelet Mamo Shay)**

The community is mostly Orthodox, wealthy and very inviting. Slowly, over the years, the community grew and expanded thanks to people who arrived from all over the world, including several thousand Israelis who are sent to Singapore every year by their workplaces on missions or special projects.

The few Jews who remained in Singapore after the war stood out. For example, David Marshall, who was a successful Jewish lawyer and served as Singapore’s first chief minister from 1955 to 1956. To this very day, on the anniversary of his death, many residents from a wide spectrum of the country’s different religions pay their respects to him.

**Strong Ties to the Jewish State of Israel**

In 1965, when Singapore gained its independence and split from Malaysia, Israel was one of the few countries which helped the new republic. Singapore’s residents are still grateful to Israel to this very day, and the Israelis are very popular in the country.

The community is led by Rabbi Mordechai Abergel. I met with him in his modest office after a comprehensive security check at the entrance to the community building. He has been serving as the community rabbi since 1994, but although more than 20 years have passed, it seems that his vigor and positive energies have only increased over the years.

The rabbi is very involved in everything taking place in his community, and keeps it united by holding joint Shabbat meals and communal events during the Jewish holidays. The highlight of the year is the Lag B’Omer bonfire, which brings together 700 people.

**Rabbi Also Serves as Community’s**

**Kosher Poultry Shochet**

Rabbi Abergel also serves as the community’s shochet. He slaughters the poultry himself in a bid to keep the prices low and reasonable for kashrus observing consumers. The rabbi believes that every Jewish home, wherever it is, should observe kashrut, and therefore only the cost price is charged for the chicken. The beef, on the other hand, has to be imported from Australia, so its price in Singapore is much more expensive.

The rabbi is also an authorized mohel but prefers not to take any chances, so most new parents privately book a mohel from Israel for their son’s circumcision ritual.

There are two active shuls in Singapore, Chesed-El and Maghain Aboth. The latter, which was built in the early 20th century, is located in the community compound on Waterloo Street, which also includes a mikvah, a kosher store which offers a variety of products from Israel and around the world, and a banquet hall which holds weddings, bar mitzvah, anniversaries and workshops.

The compound also includes a kosher restaurant under Rabbi Abergel’s supervision, which serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers Shabbos meals and catering services, and even a conference room for business people. Due to its many activities and the rapid growth in the number of community members, the government has approved the construction of another floor for the building.

The community also has a retirement home. Some 150 students from the Jewish community study in the Jewish school named after Manasseh Meyer, one of Singapore’s rich Jewish residents. The Israelis prefer the international school. A new and spacious building is being constructed these days for some 500 students, from the age of preschool to high school. Its construction is expected to be completed in the coming months.

**Community Sunday School**

Several years ago, Rabbi Abergel and the Israeli Embassy in Singapore introduced the Sunday School, which is open to Israeli and Jewish students from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. The curriculum focuses on Hebrew and Torah studies, Jewish holidays and tradition.

Local residents told me that the schools creates a feeling of “home” and serves as a bridge between secular and religious Jews and between the Israelis and the local Jews. The school’s students may complete their studies until the matriculation exams period, according to the Israeli education system.

Rabbi Abergel finds it very important to maintain good relations with the non-Jewish population, but clarifies that anti-Semitism does not skip a single Jew anywhere in the world, and so the Jews must be careful and watchful.

One of Singapore’s advantages, he says, is the strength and dominance of the government. For example, the government won’t let anyone change a thing in the David Elias building, which was sold a long time ago and no longer belongs to Singapore’s Jews.

**Six Yeshiva Students Help Community**

The rabbi is definitely busy, but he has many “little angels” who help him. One of them is Rabbi Netanel Rivni, who arrived in the community in 2006 and has been serving as Rabbi Abergel’s right hand. Rabbi Rivni is in charge of a group of six yeshiva students, and together they organize many activities for the entire community. They are also responsible for preparing the bas and bar mitzvah kids for their big day.

With such a courteous and helpful Jewish community, anyone arriving in Singapore for pleasure, business or relocation will never feel alone. “Good things come in small packages,” my mother told me. Singapore’s small Jewish community definitely fits this definition.

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