

IllumiNations

Issue 198 | Parshas Noach 5786

CHABAD SHLUCHIM WORLDWIDE SHARE THEIR STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINES.  DollarDaily.org

Dedicated in Memory of Harav Moshe Kotlarsky - Pioneering A Generation of The Rebbe's Shluchim

Rabbi Yisrolik and Mushka Peles, Chabad of Ariel Sharon, Nahariya, Israel

Still Under Development, Chabad of Nahariya Part II

By Chaya Chazan

Bringing mezuzos to a family just moving to their new home was the perfect way to meet people, and we spent a lot of time on that at first.

The community grew rapidly enough that we soon started to wonder if we could attempt holding a steady minyan.

We started small, trying to get another nine men to join us in our home on Friday nights for Kabbalat Shabbat. Internal city politics made it impossible for us to advertise publicly, so it was difficult to spread the word. Although we got some commitments, I often found myself pounding the sidewalks on Friday evenings, asking passersby to complete our minyan.

My first call was to Ofer*, a man I'd recently met who lived nearby.

"I'm starting a weekly Kabbalat Shabbat," I told him. "Would you like to join?"

"Of course!" Ofer responded.

His enthusiasm was infectious, and I hung up feeling a lot more cheerful than I'd been before. After a few more calls that ended in vague promises or outright refusals, I couldn't help thinking about Ofer's eagerness again. Bemused, I stared at the phone for a few minutes before finally dialling him again.

"Ofer," I said. "Do you attend shul now?"

Ofer paused. "The truth is, I haven't been to shul in 30 years."

"So why are you so eager to come to my Kabbalat Shabbat now?"

Ofer laughed on the other end of the phone. "That's what you meant? I thought we were talking about something on Friday afternoon. With food and music to welcome the Shabbat."

Suddenly, his reaction made more sense to me. Even after I explained what I'd actually had in mind, Ofer agreed to come to my Kabbalat Shabbat and give it a try.

It's been three years, and the man who hadn't stepped foot in a shul in 30 years has barely missed a single Friday night davening.

Of course, this dramatic shift in Ofer had me curious, and eventually I asked him why he was suddenly so committed to his Shabbos prayers.

"It isn't that I didn't see importance in them before," he admitted. "I just hated going to shul."

"Why?" I pushed.

"I tried once, decades ago. I walked into a shul on Yom Kippur, ready to daven. But every time I tried to sit down, I was asked to move, since I was apparently in someone's saved spot. Eventually, I felt so uncomfortable, I left and didn't dare go back for 30 years."

Ofer's experience inspired me to establish a new rule in our shul: when a guest comes, find him a place to sit, even if it means giving up your spot! First and foremost, we want our guests to feel comfortable.

Today, Ofer is more than just a presence at our Kabbalat Shabbat; he is an active member of our community. He helps us with his connections in the local government, he donates his time and money, and he constantly spreads the word about our activities and events. Last year, he voluntarily posted shofar blowing times on the local WhatsApp group!

While our cozy little home shul worked for a while, as Tishrei approached, we knew we'd need something bigger, and, hopefully, more permanent.

Ofer had many friends who worked in the local government. As a regular minyan-goer, he knew exactly what we needed. He called his contacts and helped us find space in a newly opened elementary school. They'd made it bigger than their current needs, so there were a few classrooms they weren't using. They allowed us to use those rooms as our shul for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Originally, the agreement was for us to use the school just for Tishrei, but the principal became a close friend, and he allowed us to continue using it for as long as the school didn't need those rooms.

Of course, the rooms aren't available during school days, so we can only use them on Shabbos, and in the evenings for shiurim. However, it's an exciting step above piling into our living room every week, and we hope to soon find a permanent home for our shul.

Every once in a while, I like to take my son for walks in the park. In addition to enjoying our quality time together, it's a great opportunity to meet people while we're "out and about." Since our town is still developing, there aren't many stores or public centers where we could meet otherwise. I always make sure to bring my tefillin along, and offer it to anyone we meet along the tree-lined pathways.

One afternoon, I saw another young father, also there with his sons. I offered him a friendly, sympathetic smile, and when he responded in kind, I slowly made my way over to introduce myself and offer him a chance to put on tefillin. He politely, but firmly, refused, and kept walking.

I continued on my way as well, resuming our walk. A few minutes later, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"Slicha, Harav." It was the young father from before. "Is it too late to change my mind?"

"Of course not!" I answered.

As he rolled up his sleeve and watched me wrap the black leather straps around his arm, he explained, laughing nervously. "I haven't put on tefillin since my bar mitzvah, so I was a little taken aback when you first asked. But as I walked away, I couldn't help thinking that Hashem sent you to me. It's been years, but it felt like a Divine message was telling me, it's finally time."

In every building in the neighborhood, we set up a small stand with Shabbos candles. Baruch Hashem, these have



been instrumental in inspiring many women to start lighting candles every Friday.

One day, I received a call from a woman who introduced herself as Ditza*.

"Is this Chabad?" she asked, hesitation coloring her voice. "I saw your Shabbat candles table and I wanted to reach out -"

"Sure, of course! How can I help you?" I asked, in my most encouraging tone.

"My son, Guy*, will be bar mitzvah soon," she said. "Can you teach him to read from the Torah?"

"It would be my pleasure," I answered.

Teaching 12 year old boys to lein is pretty standard for a shliach, but this student was different from others. Most pre-bar mitzvah boys have some connection to Yiddishkeit. They understand what mitzvos are, and what will be expected of them as they attain the status of adults according to Jewish law. Guy had never celebrated Shabbos. He'd never heard of most Chagim. He was surprised to hear that bacon was unacceptable.

I threw myself into giving Guy a thorough crash course on Judaism, and taught him to lein his parsha. Over time, we became close with Guy and his family.

One morning, Ditza called in a panic. "Can you come over now?" she asked, her voice shaking. "I need you to check my mezuzos!"

I saw she was in no shape to answer any questions, so I just brought them to the sofer, asking him to prioritize them.

The next day, the sofer called me. "One of the mezuzos is pasul," he said. "The word livanecha - your sons - is problematic."

When I relayed the news to Ditza, she paled. Her eyes grew wide, and she seemed to be holding back tears with effort.

"This is unbelievable!" she explained. "Last night, I got a call from the police telling me to check on my son. I ran to his room in a panic, but he was exactly where he was supposed to be - asleep in his bed. So, of course, I went back to the police asking them what could have prompted such worry, and they told me something I never wanted to hear - that no mother ever wants to hear. The police had been alerted by my son's internet searches. He was Googling methods of suicide."

Guy was struggling in school. He was the victim of intense bullying. It had damaged him so badly, he saw suicide as his only means of escape. After months of treatment and therapy, Guy was doing much better.

"I think you kept him alive," Ditza told me, months later. "When Guy was being bullied and he felt like there was no hope, he looked forward to your weekly learning sessions as rays of light in his life. Learning with you brought him genuine happiness."

To this day, we remain close friends. When things get too much for Guy, Ditza lets me know and I pick him up to take him on small day trips.

For a family so unaffiliated and unfamiliar with even basic tenets of Judaism, they've made tremendous strides. Guy's father had agreed to put on tefillin multiple times, and the entire family is interested in learning more about Yiddishkeit.

We were excited to host a grand bonfire for Lag Baomer this year. I researched which permits I'd need, and filled out the applications flawlessly. We were sure the application would be approved, so we began ordering supplies and inviting friends.

However, the long awaited approval never materialized. For whatever reason, someone in the local government made it their personal mission to make sure we wouldn't be able to run any events. It reached a point where every authorization we tried to obtain was being double and even triple checked, and oftentimes rejected.

At first, I didn't think much of it. But when officials kept popping up and checking my licenses and enforcing long-outdated regulations, I realized that something was amiss. Eventually, I was clued into the fact that there was a person working his hardest to keep me from getting any permissions.

At a standstill, I decided to write to the Rebbe. The result was nearly instantaneous. From the moment we sent the letter, all objections disappeared, and by the end of the day, everything was back on track — our events were confirmed as planned.

Liad* grew up in a typically secular Israeli family. He knew just the barest basics about yomim tovim and mitzvos. After some persistent encouragement, he agreed to attend our Friday night minyan regularly.

Liad seemed insistent on fulfilling the bare minimum of his obligation. He was always the last one to arrive and the first to leave. Every week, I tried my best to catch a word with him, but he vanished before the final words of davening were fully verbalized.

One Friday night, I was shocked to see Liad arrive a full five minutes before the scheduled time!

"Shabbat Shalom Liad!" I greeted him. "It's so nice to see you here early!"

"I needed to speak with you," he explained. "I feel funny even asking you, but I have nowhere else to turn!"

"That's what I'm here for!" I smiled. "How can I help?"

"I don't know that you can." He hesitated before rushing into an explanation. "For the last few weeks, I've had debilitating stomach pains. I've been to plenty of doctors. They ordered scans and tests of every part of me, but learned nothing from it. I abstained from one food, then another, but nothing made any difference. There is no medical answer to my pain. Some doctors suggested it might be my heart... I feel funny asking a rabbi, but my wife said -"

"We need to check your mezuzos," I interrupted.

Liad looked at me quizzically. "That's exactly what my wife said!"

That Sunday, I took his mezuzos to the sofer. A day later, I called Liad with the results.

"Four of your five mezuzos are pasul," I told him. "In one, the word levavecha - your heart - is completely erased!"

Liad accompanied me to the sofer to purchase new mezuzos and we hung them on every doorway in his house.

"Refuah shleima!" I wished him. "I expect to hear good news soon! And see you at the minyan this week - nice and early!"

That week, Liad looked a little better when he came to shul. The next week, he looked every better. The week after that, he smiled and told me his stomach pains were all gone.

Since then, Liad has been a steady, reliable member of our weekly minyan - and sometimes, he even stays for a little shmooze!

**Names changed to protect identity*

DollarDaily.org

a Project of

**YadLShliach.org
and COLlive.com**

COL LIVE



✦ KIBID IMPACT REPORT 5786 / 2025 ✦

\$213,000 RAISED FOR SHLUCHIM WORLDWIDE!

87 Maftir Yonahs — \$41,000+

106 Chosson Torahs — \$53,000+

84 Chosson Bereishis — \$33,000+

65 Tefillas Geshem — \$24,000+

73 P'sicha Neilah — \$24,000+

+ Plus dozens more kibudim sold!

💡 Every dollar went directly to Shluchim — zero platform fees.

TOGETHER, WE RAISED \$213,000 THIS YEAR (UP FROM \$104,000 LAST YEAR!)

🙏 **THANK YOU FOR HELPING SHLUCHIM ACROSS THE WORLD!**

Kibid.org