

DONOR Appreciation REPORT

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Thank You For Lighting Up Our Community

Dear Friend,

Thanks to your support, our community recently experienced a month filled with the beauty and inspiration of the Jewish holidays, from the awe of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur to the joy of Sukkot and Simchat Torah. These celebrations have left us energized and ready to carry their insights into our daily lives throughout the year.

As we enter the chilly and dark winter season, we look forward with anticipation to the warmth and light of Chanukah. The light you bring to our community will shine even brighter this year as we gather to kindle our Chanukah menorahs with pride, strength, and joy.

Your generosity keeps the flame of Jewish life burning brightly in our community, making every day extraordinary and meaningful. Thank you for your continued partnership.

Wishing you a happy and luminous Chanukah and a joyous year ahead.

With deep appreciation,

Rabbi Chaim Zvi and Chayala Ehrenreich
Directors, Chabad of The Nyacks

Chabad Offers Comfort and Community During Difficult Times

“I FELL INTO THEIR HOME...”

Spending Yom Tov in a hospital can be unbearably lonely. In the case of Yosef F., who was hospitalized with dehydration right before Sukkos, it was actually detrimental to his health.

The day before erev Sukkos, Yosef was admitted to Montefiore Nyack Hospital. He hadn't yet put on tefillin that day. Unable to find anyone to bring him tefillin before sunset, he contacted Rabbi Ehrenreich, a volunteer chaplain at the hospital, who assured him he'd be there shortly. “On such a busy day, right before Yom Tov, Rabbi Ehrenreich put his own needs aside to be sure I had everything I needed.”

In case Yosef would be discharged during the three-day holiday, the rabbi invited Yosef for Sukkos and gave him directions to his home.

The holiday began, with Yosef subsisting on liquids and applesauce. He wanted to eat these small rations in the hospital sukkah, but as a patient, he was not allowed off his floor. The isolation was getting to him. Frustrated, by Friday afternoon, he requested to be discharged.

Shlepping his suitcase, and in a weakened state, Yosef slowly walked a mile to the Ehrenreichs.

“I fell into their home like a child falling into its mother's arms,” said Yosef. “Sitting in their sukkah with fellow Jews was the greatest joy!”

For Yosef, who had a purely Chassidic upbringing, the diversity and acceptance he observed at Chabad of the Nyacks was stunning. “The tangible love in the air, the warmth of the atmosphere, all without judgment, was amazing.”

Yosef added, “I have been in other mixed situations with Jews of different levels of observance. We were encouraged to tolerate each other. **Chabad is completely different. It isn't about tolerance. It is love.**”



When Rabbi Ehrenreich contacted Sholom after the holiday to return the shofar, Sholom insisted on gifting it to Chabad of The Nyacks, expressing his deep appreciation for the welcoming community he found during a challenging time.

THE BEST SHOFAR

Just before Rosh Hashana, an elderly local man was hospitalized in Montefiore Nyack Hospital. His son, Sholom, traveled from Israel to be with his father, arriving shortly after Iran's October 1 attack on Israel. A friend had given Sholom a special shofar to blow for his father in the hospital and for himself if he couldn't find a synagogue for Rosh Hashana.

Sholom was relieved to discover that Chabad of The Nyacks offered Rosh Hashana services near the hospital. Attending the first evening service, he was amazed by the diverse and sizable Jewish community gathered in prayer.

The next morning, Sholom brought his special shofar to shul and offered it to Rabbi Ehrenreich. Although the rabbi had other shofars, he graciously accepted, and later remarked on its beautiful sound and ease of use. “It was the best shofar I have ever blown!” said the rabbi.

Passing the Torch: “It's Now or Never”

On Saturday mornings, Chris and Suzanne Barish often noticed a bearded man in a tallit pass by their home on Midland Avenue on his way to Shabbat services. When their son, Ben, a Nyack Middle School student, approached age thirteen, they wondered if they could arrange a bar mitzvah for him, even though they were not affiliated with a synagogue or actively involved in Jewish life.

Until this point, most of Ben's exposure to Judaism was during visits to his grandparents in Israel.

“It was now or never,” said Chris. “My father had a bar mitzvah. I had a bar mitzvah. I felt it was my duty to give my son a spiritual education,” said Chris.

Ben's parents were concerned that six months wasn't enough time to prepare him for his bar mitzvah. Chris' aunt Laura, a local real estate agent, connected him to Chabad of The Nyacks, where Rabbi Ehrenreich, the “bearded passerby,” reassured them that with Ben's commitment, it could be done.

Ben, an accomplished young musician and composer who received the Marvin Hamlisch International award, is well acquainted with hard work and commitment. He gave it his all, meeting with the rabbi once or twice a week to learn the foundations of Jewish belief and basic mitzvot such as tefillin. “Ben was in good hands,” said Chris. “He really enjoyed his time at Chabad.”

On a Shabbat morning shortly before Rosh Hashana, Ben, in the presence of his extended family, celebrated a beautiful bar mitzvah ceremony at Chabad of The Nyacks. He carried the Torah, made blessings, and gave a speech. Relatives shared the joyous occasion with their own aliyot to the Torah.

“With the way things have been going this past year, I felt more pride in my Judaism,”

said Chris. “It was important to me for Ben to embrace his Jewishness at this time. It also made Suzanne and I feel more connected to Judaism.”

Since the bar mitzvah, the Barish family has participated in Chabad events such as the Tefillin Club and Shabbat dinners.

“I really appreciate how Chabad is very welcoming to people of all kinds, including those who aren't super religious. It's just a place you can go. We are very grateful. It still feels really good.”



A Jewish Burial Heals a Family

When Dr. Stuart Kossover wants to physically connect to his late father, Marty, he reaches out to a mahogany sculpture Marty created before Stuart was born representing a father's hand lovingly holding his son's.

"Whenever I want to tell him I love and miss him, I grasp the father's hand," Stu says. This touching gesture belies the fact that the relationship between Stu and his father was bitter; for the final few years of Marty's life, they were estranged.

Unexpectedly, Marty's funeral brought Stu to a more peaceful acceptance of their relationship. In fact, everything about the graveside service at Gates of Zion in Airmont, was unexpected.

After his retirement, Marty reconnected with his Jewish heritage, becoming active with Chabad of The Nyacks. However, he didn't leave funeral plans or instructions for after his death. Some friends who were close to him insisted that he wanted to be cremated.

When Marty passed in August at age 92, a paramedic found an address book with Rabbi Ehrenreich's name as the first listing. The rabbi contacted Stu and his son, Brooks, who was extremely close to his grandfather, to discuss next steps. Brooks, who wanted to handle the funeral arrangements himself, was undecided over cremation versus burial. He shared this with his father, who then sought clarification.

"The rabbi explained the importance of honoring the deceased by burial, unlike how Jewish bodies were desecrated during the Holocaust," said Stu. "My father went to Chabad of The Nyacks - even if just for the bagels - and he prayed at the Kotel. It was clear to me that he needed to be buried, not cremated."

No funds were immediately available to pay for the funeral, so Stu, who lives in North Carolina, covered the funeral expenses and travel arrangements for the family to meet in Rockland.

"When we arrived at the cemetery, I assumed there were other burials taking place, because there were about 50 strangers there," said Stu. In fact, these "strangers" were people who had gathered to ensure a minyan and to give Marty, a Korean War Veteran, an honorable send-off.

After Stu tore his shirt, he began to cry his first tears since hearing of his father's death. He was deeply touched when an elderly Jew came over and asked if he could hug him.

"When they lowered the casket into the grave, I realized how exhausted I was from the decades of resentment and anger I had about my father," said Stu. Sobbing, he decided to bury this anguish once and for all, and declared this out loud to the assembled.

As Stu walked away from the grave, the man who had hugged him came up to him again, putting one hand on his cheek and the other on his shoulder, gazing lovingly, long, and deeply into Stu's eyes. Not a word was uttered. "I felt as if I was looking into my father's eyes for the first time in years; that he had actually returned to me with love and reassurance."

Thanks to a community coming together to give a fellow Jew a kosher burial, years of acrimony melted away. **"I never could have imagined the peace in my spirit that I now feel, all because of the events of my father's burial and the loving guidance of Rabbi Ehrenreich,"** said Stu.

