

chadi TIMES

CHABAD HOUSE

JEWISH STUDENT CENTER

BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK

Serving the Community through Education and Inspiration

Iyar 5764

May 2004

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in the NEWS

Campus-Wide Lag B'omer Celebration

The campus and general Jewish community are invited to join in a grand Lag B'omer celebration to take place Sunday, May 9 at 5pm in Sinisi Park at Binghamton University (located between Susquehanna parking lot and the nature preserve). Co-sponsored by the Chabad House and Hillel, the event will include the traditional bon-fire, an all-you-can-eat Barbecue, smores, music, dancing and sports games. Participants are encouraged to bring their sports equipment, musical instruments and healthy appetites. In case of rain the event will be held at the Chabad House, 420 Murray Hill Road.

Rabbi Manis Friedman To Lead NY Weekend Retreat

What do Bob Dylan, Paul Harvey and Senator Rudy Boshwitz have in common? They have all studied Torah with Rabbi Manis Friedman and now you can do the same.

For the Shabbat weekend of May 14-16, Rabbi Friedman, acclaimed author, scholar and spiritual teacher, will lead a retreat in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, NY, the center of the worldwide Chabad-Lubavitch movement. The weekend will include lectures by Rabbi Friedman, sumptuous Shabbat meals, accessible and heart warming services and the experience of being submerged in one of the most interesting and vibrant Jewish communities today.

During the course of the weekend Rabbi Friedman will address topics such as: Jewish Cosmology: The Who, What, and Why's of Creation, The Kabbalah of Parenting: Practical How-To's or More Effective Parenting, If It's All for the Good, Why Does It Feel So Bad?, Getting tTo Like the People We Love?, and Life After Life: Reincarnation and the Eternal Soul. Simultaneous to the presentation on parenting will be a workshop for singles titled "The Kosher Connection" in which noted teacher Shimona Tzukernik will offer insights on dating and marriage, and offer the opportunity to meet other singles in a new way.

For complete details or to register, call Faygie at (718) 774-6187 from 10:30am-3:30pm or 9-10:30pm or on line at www.shabbaton.org (click on current Shabbaton) Registration must be completed by Wednesday, May 12; limited scholarships are available.

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Dinner to Mark Chabad's 20th Anniversary Raff, Serkins To Be Honored

Chabad House will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a dinner to be tendered for the Binghamton community on Thursday, June 17, at the Jewish Community Center in Vestal. Guests of honor will be Jack and Marlene Serkin and Barry Raff, three special friends and active supporters of the Chabad House throughout its two decades of service. The dinner will also mark the tenth Yahrzeit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory. Barry Newman will chair the dinner; Abe Piaker will chair the commemorative dinner journal.

"It is hard to believe that almost twenty years have passed since we first moved here. The Binghamton community is a wonderfully welcoming and nourishing one and we are deeply grateful to our many friends who have helped us come to this point. At the dinner we will honor three extraordinary individuals who are known and loved for their kindness and assistance to the organizations in our community. Specifically, we recognize them for their consistent and devoted support of the Chabad House," said Rabbi Aaron Slonim, Chabad House director.

"I am delighted that our community has this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate what Chabad has meant to all of us and to honor Jack and Marlene Serkin and Barry Raff for all of their hard work and support that they have shown to Chabad over the years. An anniversary is a time of joy and celebration and Chabad's twentieth anniversary truly warrants taking the time to reflect and remember all the many positive accomplishments that have been achieved. The dinner offers all of us an opportunity to extend a heartfelt *Yasher Koach* to Chabad and to our honorees both by being present at the dinner and

by supporting the Dinner Journal," commented Michael Wright, Chabad House president.

"I can clearly remember the day just shy of twenty years ago when I first met Rabbi Aaron Slonim when he walked into my office to consult with me on incorporating Chabad House locally. From those humble beginnings out of a basement apartment, Chabad has grown into a community institution and a tremendous resource for both the students of BU and our community as a whole. Hundreds and hundreds of students each year have felt the warmth and friendliness that embraces all who enter the ever open doors of Chabad House. Nourished in body and in spirit, each of these students have come to cherish Chabad House in their own special way fondly holding onto memories of their times at Chabad as they make their careers and grow their families around the world. Those hundreds have grown into thousands and the work continues on with the students of today and those of tomorrow."

"The dinner is being held a few days before the third day in the Hebrew month of Tammuz, the Rebbe's Yahrzeit, so that we can, as an organization and as a community recognize and appreciate the Rebbe's enormous gift to the world: the gift of unconditional love and care for every single Jew. It is the Rebbe's vision and teachings, and his trailblazing and legendary efforts to reach out and reach in to every Jew, that drives the work of Chabad House in Binghamton and its sister organizations throughout the world," commented Rivkah Slonim, Chabad's education director.

The evening will begin with a cocktail



Mr. Jack and Mrs. Marlene Serkin



Dr. Barret Raff

reception at 5:30pm with dinner following at 6:30pm; Pam Gray will cater the event. For details concerning placing an ad in the dinner journal please call Chabad House at (607)797-0015.

Chabad House Winning Programming recognized with Xcelsior awards

The Chabad House Jewish Student Center won numerous awards at the sixth annual Xcelsior awards ceremony, an evening of recognition showcasing the best of Binghamton University's programming and student talent. In the Religious Organizations category, Chabad House won multiple awards including the organization of the year award. Chabad was awarded trophies for the Big Fat Jewish Wedding as the educational program of the year, for the Purim Carnival Extravaganza for the promotion of intercultural understanding, the Outstanding fund raising award for the numerous fund raising efforts which in total raised \$7,850 for charities within our community and in Israel, for the Chabad House Mitzvah Corps as the outstanding Community Service program and for the noted Shabbat 1000 event. Hallie Pollack won the outstanding non-executive board



Chabad House student leaders accept plaques and trophies at the XCELSior Award Ceremony

member award while Amy Gordon took home the outstanding executive board member award.

"We had an absolutely outstanding student executive board this year; each one of them worked very hard producing a year rich with diverse activities. I am extremely thankful to them and proud to have worked with these current and future leaders. They certainly set a new bar for any incoming e-board members, said Rabbi Aaron Slonim. "The awards are all to their credit and to the credit of the hundreds of other students who have worked to make these programs a success."

**CHABAD HOUSE
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from the DIRECTORS

Bringing Heaven to Earth

Very shortly we will be celebrating the holiday of Shavuot, the festival which commemorates our receipt of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

The Midrash records an interesting dialogue that preceded that historic event:

When Moses ascended on high (to receive the Torah and bring it down to the Jewish people), the ministering angels said before G-d: "Do you wish to give to one of flesh and blood the precious treasure which has been hidden with You for nine hundred and seventy four generations prior to the world's creation? Lord, our Master, how mighty is Your Name upon all the earth and You extend Your majesty over the heavens; what is a human that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should visit him (Psalms:8)".

G-d said to Moses: "Give them an answer."

Moses said: "Lord of the Universe, I fear lest they burn me with the breath of their mouths."

Said G-d to him: "Hold on to the Throne of My Glory and answer them."

Moses said before Him: "Lord of the Universe, the Torah that you have given me, what is written in it? 'I am the Lord your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt!' Said Moses to the angels; "Have you gone down to Egypt? Have you been in bondage to Pharaoh? Why should the Torah be yours? What is further written in it? 'You shall not have other G-ds upon My Face. Do you dwell amongst other nations who worship idols?... What is further written in it? 'Remember the Shabbat to keep it holy.' Do you then do work that you need to rest?... 'Honor your father and mother' Do you have fathers and mothers? ... They agreed.... Each of them became a loving friend of Moses and gave him a gift.

The cited Midrash highlights the ultimate reason for the giving of the Torah to humankind: G-d's desire for a synergy between the material and the spiritual, the mundane and the sublime. Angels don't have to pay taxes, catch planes, and meet deadlines. Angels don't have to hustle to make a living, keep up with the Joneses or worry about how they will stack up at an alumni reunion. They don't lust or covet or hate. But that is not to their credit; it is simply because they are removed from the earthly sphere and were created without need or ability to make moral choices. Men and women on the other hand, can and must choose, almost every moment of their lives. Only humans experience the pull towards, and therefore the conflict between, the earthy and the heavenly. It is what Steinsaltz calls "the strife of the spirit" that ultimately makes man's decision to internalize and act upon the word of G-d, so meaningful.

Too often, we tend to separate

the G-dly dimension from the everyday minutiae that fills our lives. Religion is relegated to a neat compartment to be opened for life cycle events, times of crisis and the most important holidays. Prayer and communion with G-d are reserved for special occasions. But that is to miss the point! The *raison d'être* of the giving of the Torah was for our every activity, however mundane, to be suffused with G-dliness.

In a poignant Biblical passage, G-d declares: "For this commandment that I command you today is not beyond your understanding, nor is it far away. It is not in heaven so that you could say: 'Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it to us and make us hear it so that we may carry it out?' Neither is it beyond the sea so that you could say: 'Who shall go for us to the other side of the sea and make us hear it so that we can carry it out?' For the word (Torah) is very near to you, to carry it out with your mouth and your heart." (Deut.30: 11-14)

Even since we stood at Sinai and received the Torah it became possible – and therefore incumbent upon us – to synthesize the material and spiritual aspects of life. That became our charge and privilege. Every Shavuot, we stand again at Sinai. We reactivate the covenant; we rededicate ourselves to this mission. And we are once again granted the strength to bring this grand scheme to fruition. For all of us, Shavuot is a critical juncture; let us do what we can to make it inspirational and memorable for ourselves and our families.

To our graduates, this holiday holds special meaning. As you leave the comfort and security of college where many of you have enjoyed and were active in Jewish life, do not fear the larger world. Do not doubt your ability to make Yiddishkeit a pervasive feature of your lives. On the contrary, use your experiences here as catalysts for bringing added Jewish vitality to the world around you it is possible!

We wish you Mazel Tov upon this milestone; may you see the fulfillment of your every dream and prayer. While we will miss you dearly, we watch you leave with a smile, confident that each of you will make a special mark upon the world that awaits you. *L'hitraot*, we will not say good bye, for one never graduates from Chabad House and we hope to see you again soon.

To Rabbi Yitzi and Dina Creeger we bid farewell and wish tremendous Hatzlacha in your future. We will miss you and remember with gratitude and fondness your many contributions to the Chabad House and our extended family.

To all our friends, we wish a good Yom Tov and a restful, healthy and productive summer.

Aaron and Ricky Slonim



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Under Rabbinical Supervision

Jim Wagner - President

724-5550

Chabad of Binghamton, on behalf of all the students who participated, expresses its heartfelt appreciation

to

**Mr. Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin of
AGRI PROCESSORS**
for his tremendous support of

Shabbat 1000 of 2004

It was an unforgettable evening for all of us and we are incredibly grateful to you for helping make it possible.



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TORAH thoughts

Adapted from the Works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Bow and Arrow: The Power of the Mystical

Lag BaOmer, the 33rd day of the Omer Count that connects Passover to Shavuot (corresponding this year to Sunday, May 9), is the birthday of Jewish mysticism.

For many generations, the inner soul of Torah – also known as the “Kabbalah” – was transmitted from teacher to disciple in the form of cryptic maxims, in private, and only to a very few individuals in each generation. These teachings chart the sublime expanses of the divine reality, the processes of creation, G-d’s relationship to our existence and the inner recesses of the human soul. The tremendous power they contain, and their extreme subtlety, makes them extremely vulnerable to corruption. Thus, for many years it was forbidden to reveal these teachings.

The first to disseminate the



teachings of Kabbalah to a wider group of disciples was Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in the 2nd century CE. The most significant revelation came about on the day of Rabbi Shimon’s passing, on which he expounded for many hours on the most intimate secrets of the divine wisdom. That day was Lag BaOmer.

Centuries were to pass before the great Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria (the “Holy Ari”, 1534-1572) would proclaim, “In these times, we are allowed and duty-bound to reveal this wisdom,” and Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) and his disciples were to make them accessible to all via the teachings of Chassidism. But Lag BaOmer remains the day on which “Jewish mysticism” made its first emergence from the womb of secrecy and exclusivity. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai instructed his disciples to celebrate this day as a joyous festival – and so it is marked in every Jewish community to this day.

One of the ways in which we celebrate Lag BaOmer is by taking children out to parks and fields to play with bows and arrows. The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the bow-and-arrow symbolizes the power of inwardness – the power unleashed by the mystic soul of Torah.

The first weapons devised by man were designed for hand-to-hand combat. But a person’s enemy or prey is not always an arm’s length away, or even within sight. Soon the warrior and hunter

By Yanki Tauber

felt the need for a weapon that could reach a target a great distance away, or which lies invisible and protected behind barriers of every sort.

With a bow and arrow, the tension in an arched bough of wood is exploited to propel a missile for great distances and slash through barriers. The inventor of this device first had to grasp the paradox that the deadly arrow must be pulled back toward one’s own heart in order to strike the heart of the opponent, and that the more it is drawn toward oneself, the more distant an adversary it can reach.

The external body of Torah is our tool for meeting the obvious challenges of life. Do not kill or steal, it instructs us; feed the hungry, hallow your relationships with the sanctity of marriage, rest on Shabbat, eat only kosher foods – for thus you will preserve the order that G-d instituted in His world and develop it in accordance with the purpose towards which He created it.

But not everything is as up front as the explicit do’s and don’ts of the Torah. Beyond them lie the ambiguities of intent and motive, the subtleties of love and awe, the interplay of ego and commitment; the



The Rebbe

taint of evil that shadows the most holy of endeavors, and the sparks of goodness that lie buried within the darkest reaches of creation. How are we to approach these challenges, so distant from our sensory reach and so elusive of our mind’s comprehension?

This is where the mystical dimension of Torah comes in. It guides us in a retreat to our own essence, to the very core of our soul. It illuminates the selfless heart of the self, the spark of G-dliness within us that is one with its Creator and His creation. From there we unleash the power to deal with the most distant and obscure adversary; from there we catapult our redeeming influence to the most forsaken corners of G-d’s world.

What Is Kabbalah?

By Tzvi Freeman

Kabbalah: That which is received. That which cannot be known through science or intellectual pursuit alone. An inner knowledge that has been passed down from sage to student from the earliest of times. A discipline that awakens awareness of the essence of things.

We enter this world and our senses meet its outer crust. We touch the earth with our feet, water and wind splash against our skin, we recoil from the bite of fire. We hear sounds and rhythms. We see shapes and colors. Soon we begin to measure, to weigh and describe with precision. As scientists, we record the behaviors of chemicals, plants, animals and human beings. We videotape them, observe them under a microscope, create mathematical models of them, fill a supercomputer with data about them. From our observations we learn to harness our environment with inventions and contraptions, and then pat ourselves on the back and say, Yes, we got it right.

But we ourselves, our consciousness that is examining this world, we reside on a deeper layer. That is why we cannot help but ask, What about the thing itself? That which is there before we measured it? What is matter, energy, time, space – and how do they come to be?

To explain our world without examining this inner depth is as shallow as explaining the workings of a computer by describing the images viewed on its monitor. If we see a ball moving up and down on the screen, would we say that it is rebounding against the bottom of the screen? Do the gadgets on your scroll bar really exert some force on the page inside the window? Does the menu bar really

have drop-down menus hidden behind it?

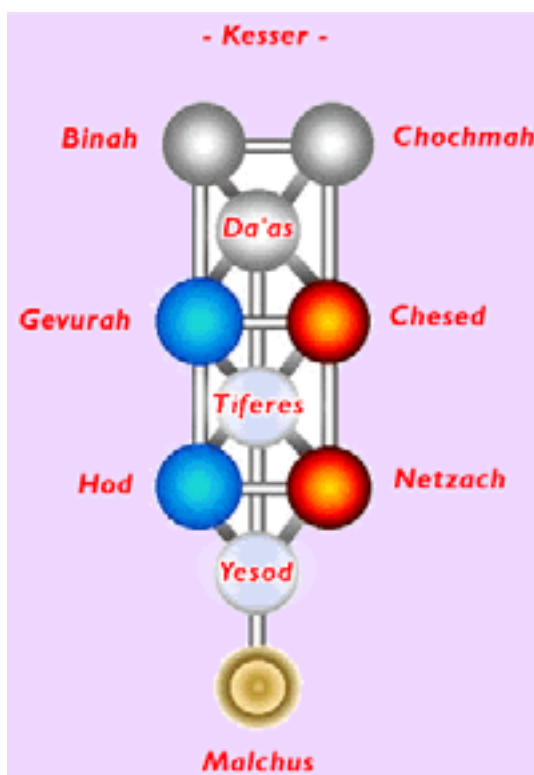
The author of a user-friendly software environment has followed consistent rules so that we can work comfortably within it. If it is a game of any complexity, he had to determine and follow a very large set of rules. But a description of those rules is not a valid explanation of how it works. For that, we need to read his code, examine the hardware, and – most importantly – look through his original concept paper. We need to see it the way its author sees it, as it evolves step by step from a concept in his mind through the code that he writes, to the

glowing phosphor pixels on the screen.

The code behind reality, the concept that breathes life into the equations and makes them real. Men and women have sacrificed their food, their comfort, traveled great distances and paid with their very lives to come to know these things. There is not a culture in the world that does not have its teachings to describe them. In Jewish teaching, they are described in the Kabbalah.

According to tradition, the truths of the Kabbalah were known to Adam. What his mind held, no mind since has been able to conceive. Yet he was able to transmit a glimmer of this knowledge to a few of the great souls that descended from him, such as Hanoch and Methuselah. They were the grand masters who taught Noah, who in turn taught his own students, including Abraham. Abraham studied in the academy of Noah’s son, Shem, and sent his son Isaac to study there after him. Isaac in turn sent his son Jacob to study with Shem and with Shem’s great-grandson, Ever.

Adam, Noah, Abraham – these were fathers of all humankind. That is why you will find inklings of the truths they taught wherever human culture has reached. Nevertheless, the essential source for the Kabbalah is not Adam or Noah or even Abraham. It is the event at Mount Sinai, where the primal essence of the cosmos was laid bare for an entire nation to see. It was an experience that left an indelible mark on the Jewish psyche, molding all our thought and behavior ever since.



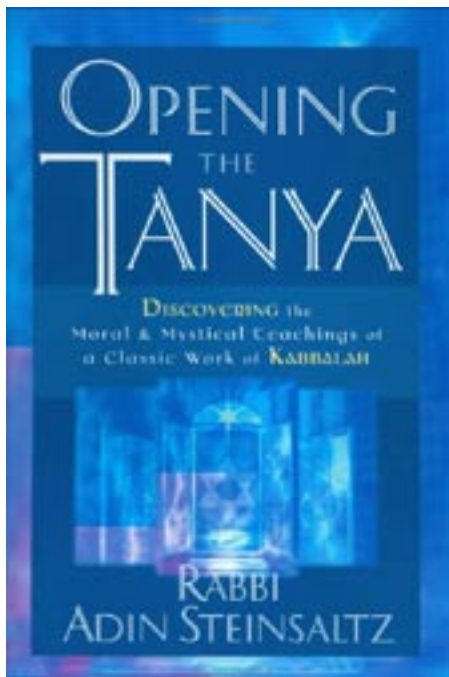
At Sinai, inner wisdom became no longer a matter of intuition or private revelation. It was now a fact that had entered our world and became part of history and the experience of common mortals. That is why Kabbalah cannot be called a philosophy. A philosophy is the product of human minds, something that any other human mind can come play with, squeezing and stretching it according to the dictates of his own intellect and intuition. But Kabbalah means, that which is received. Received not just from a teacher, but from Sinai. Once a student has mastered the path of this received knowledge, he or she may find ways to extend it further, as a tree branches out from its trunk. But it will always be an organic growth, never touching the essential life and form of that knowledge. The branches and twigs and leaves will go just where they should for such a tree – never will a maple become an oak, never will a student reveal a secret that was not hidden in his teacher’s words.

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Rabbi Freeman is the author of *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth* and *Be Within, Stay Above*, two collections of meditations based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Chabad.org mails out a ‘Daily Dose of Wisdom’ written by him, as well as a weekly, in-depth analysis of a topic in Jewish mysticism. His *Heaven Exposed* series presents classical Jewish ideas in science fiction form. He is also a contributing editor of the Chabad.org Weekly Magazine and *Farbrengen Magazine*, and a consultant for *AskMoses.com*. His web site, *theRebbe.com*, was mentioned in *Fortune Magazine* by Silicon Valley guru Marc Benioff as “one of my favorite sites.”

Opening The Tanya

Rabbi Adin Even-Yisrael Steinsaltz recently released a new book, **Opening The Tanya**. Journalist **Fay Kranz** interviews him about the book and related matters.



Title: Opening the Tanya: Discovering the Moral and Mystical Teachings of a Classic Work of Kabbalah

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Let's get this over with first and out of the way. I hate to ask it, but everyone else will. Please tell us that 'this is not Madonna's Kabbalah.'

Personally, I am not for this new Kabbalah trend, I think it is cheap and I think it presents a danger. Not that people are learning too much Kabbalah, but that they are focusing only on the mystery and secret and magic and don't address how people should change or become more Jewish. Kabbalah is not a gimmick it is something holy and serious and it needs much more than a smattering of knowledge. Imagine taking a six week course in neurosurgery and hanging up a shingle. It is not only fraudulent, but dangerous.

Why do you think Kabbalah has become so fashionable and what does that say about our culture?

It's popular now because magic is a great thing, it's new age, it uses a different language and a different formula that people don't understand and therefore find fascinating. It's interesting that the best selling books today are diet cookbooks and books about magic and spirituality. They are interconnected, it's the idea that you can rely on something spiritual, and you don't have to work hard to change yourself.

Some might say that reading the Tanya is the same thing?

No, its not the same because the

Tanya doesn't make life easier for anybody. You can't say Hallelujah and be saved. It's a very demanding book and some people have even told me it's a frightening book. Its minimum expectations are much higher than anyone will ever reach.

So tell us something about "Opening the Tanya" and why it is different from the other books you have written on this work?

The other commentaries on the Tanya, even my own book, "The Long and Short Way" give a summary of the basic concepts. But this is a book for study, not for reading, it's very detailed and the entire text is here. I think however that it is a very readable book and perhaps after speaking to me, like many reviewers you will actually go and read it.

You quote the well known statement that the Alter Rebbe, the author of the Tanya, was able to "put such a big G-d into such a small book." What do we learn about G-d from the Tanya that we didn't know before?

We learn lots of things because usually when people speak about G-d, they speak from their perception of G-d at a very basic level.

Think about it, when people say they have lost their faith its because their faith at the beginning was too weak to withstand any challenges. When your perception of G-d does not extend beyond a basic level, you can't deal with them very effectively when you grow up. We basically found that people who went as believers to the concentration camps remained believers and vice versa. In the second part of the Tanya, the Shaar Hayichud, it deals with understanding



G-d. Not that you will get to know G-d, but at least you have an order of magnitude. Its a mathematical term, if you're talking about something expensive, what order of magnitude is it, hundreds or millions?

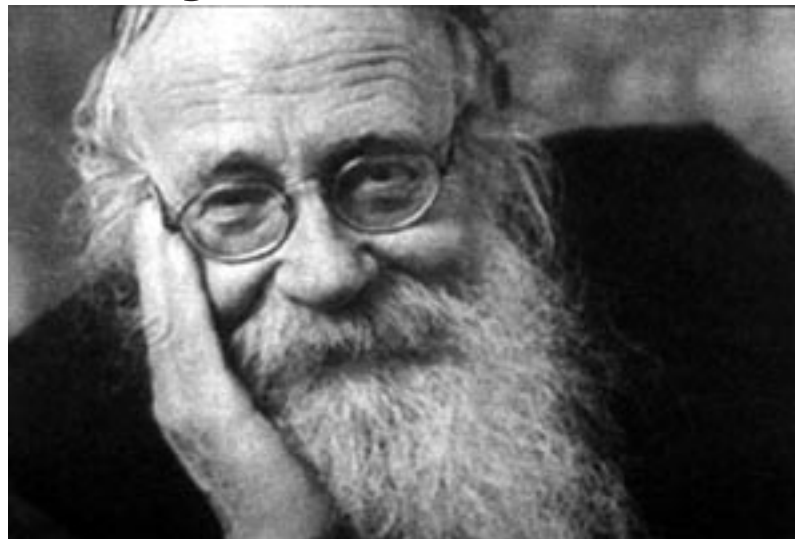
A person who learns the Tanya gets to a different order in their perception of G-d.

And along that same vein what do we find in Tanya that changes or enhances our view of human beings and how they relate to G-d in general?

You learn a great deal about human beings because the Tanya deals with people who am being formed, constantly changing, not already made. Tanya asks the difficult questions. What are the basic qualities within people? How do I change? How do I deal with other peoples' failings? Ironically, the Tanya deals with human concepts rather than ritual ones, how you understand yourself and others. Ultimately, you have a better notion of what G-d expects from you. It's not the image of the old man with or without a beard, sitting in heaven and dispensing candy to the good boys and beating the bad ones. You get a grown up version.

Can you tell us about your relationship with the Lubavitcher Rebbe

I am now in the midst of writing a book about the Rebbe. Emotionally, this book is very hard for me. When you write about someone you don't care about, its easy. The more you care, the harder it becomes. I was privileged to spend many hours with the Rebbe – we had very long meetings dealing with everything from personal questions to world events, and Israel. I always felt that the Rebbe had a message and it was always the same message. We must do everything in our power to change the world for the better. Surely he wanted that from me. I come from a nice family and my great grandfather was a very pious rabbi. He used to tell us a story that when he was a young man, he was walking with a friend and they came across a peasant whose carriage was stuck in the mud. They tried to help him, but to no avail and they said "Sorry, we cannot do any more." The



Rabbi Steinsaltz

peasant answered, "Yes you can, you don't want to". My great grandfather said that was the most important statement he heard in his life. The Lubavitcher Rebbe said the same thing, but not so harshly, more benevolently. He put more and more duties on his followers and he never said "enough". He never said "stop". His message was that we have to change the world completely in order to bring Mashiach.

Another radical message that the Rebbe imparted through his emissaries was the sea of change in thinking that if a father is observant, his son will be less so until G-d forbid there is no observance at all. That was the defensive thinking in the previous generation, but the Rebbe put Judaism on the offensive and on the winning path. As you know, today that rule is changed. Children are better than their parents. The Rebbe was a spiritual business tycoon, he took a losing business and made it profitable.

And finally, what is the message that you would like your writings and speeches to convey? Do you have a dream you'd like to still live out?

I'll tell you what I said recently in Russia and which I say also in America. Wherever you stand, take one step further. That is my message. My dream. is that it will be fulfilled and people will do it. When one person takes one step ahead, it is personal – when a million people take one step ahead, then the earth shakes.

Rabbi Adin Even-Yisrael Steinsaltz – an author, scholar, and social critic who is best known in the United States for his monumental translation of and commentary on the Talmud – is the founder of a worldwide network of Jewish educational institutions. His efforts are supported in the U.S. by the Aleph Society.

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Earn while you learn at... The Ivy League Torah Study Program

The Ivy League Torah Study Program offers collegiates the opportunity to explore the contemporary relevance of Jewish texts, law and lore while offering them a fellowship. The program is open to undergraduate and graduate students with minimal to moderate background in Jewish study. The objective is to provide interested students with a comprehensive overview of essential aspects of the Jewish tradition and the analytical tools necessary for further study.



Men's Program
June 21-August 4
Women's Program
June 21-August 1



Located at a sprawling upstate NY Catskill Mountain retreat, the academic course of study will consist of structured classes, tutorials, independent research projects, student faculty forums and guest lecturers. In addition there will be opportunity for cultural, physical and recreational activities. Each student receives full room

and board and a stipend of up to \$1,800. Admission is selective and is based on sincerity, academic excellence and limited exposure to Torah study.

For more information and applications please call the Chabad House at (607) 797-0015 or call the ILTSP at (718)735-0200.

The State of the University Address

By the Graduates of 2004

SENIOR REFLECTIONS

After four years at Binghamton University, the seniors know it all! Below you will find the thoughts and sentiments expressed by some of this year's graduates.

They were asked the following questions:

1. How has your collegiate experience at Binghamton University affected your Jewish identity?
2. Which event(s) were most memorable/meaningful/helpful/enjoyable for you as a Jew?
3. How would you describe the role of Chabad House within the greater Jewish experience at Binghamton University?
4. What would you like to see changed/added in terms of Jewish life on this university?

Name: Erica Ash

Major: Biology Minor: Theatre

Future Plans: NYU School of Medicine

When I say I am from Long Island most people automatically assume that I come from a Jewish neighborhood. The truth is, however, that I do not know of any practicing Jews in my town, so you can imagine my shock at encountering so many Jews here on campus. My Jewish identity has been formed throughout these past four years and I have been provided the tools to continue this process.

Traveling to Israel with birthright israel my freshman year was an incredible experience which ignited a spark inside of me. I remember thinking on the plane to Israel that I had to enjoy every moment because I would only be there ten days. Upon my arrival, however, I realized that I will be returning to Israel throughout my lifetime.

I have marched for Israel in Washington, DC and New York with fellow Binghamton University students. Other memorable moments include the many Shabbat dinners, Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations, and Yom HaShoah vigils. Even the simple, everyday interactions with other Jewish students has made an impact on me.

I studied in Rome, Italy last semester and was slightly apprehensive because I was uncertain about the Jewish community's presence in a predominantly Catholic country. Upon my arrival, however, I went to The Synagogue of Rome for Shabbat and met Italian-Jews who invited me to attend dinner with their family. In Venice I attended a Shabbat meal with Chabad overlooking a rio, and sang the same songs I sing at Chabad of Binghamton. In retrospect I realize that many of my most memorable moments abroad include my interactions with Jews. There is a cliché that part of the reason college students study abroad is to "find themselves". I find it ironic that traveling to a Catholic country allowed me to really connect with my Jewish identity.

Chabad House has always supported me in my endeavors at Binghamton University and elsewhere, whether it be auditioning for a play, learning the Parsha, or connecting me with Chabad of Rome during my time abroad. Chabad's resolute acceptance of all students and non-judgemental attitude is unmatched. I remember how welcomed I felt at Chabad House and on campus as well. They work from such positive energy and enabled me to see the potential in myself. Chabad has taught me about Judaism, provided an outlet for spiritual growth, and has instilled a foundation to enable me to continue this journey.

My advice to underclassmen is to keep an open mind and take advantage of the multitude of spiritual, educational and social opportunities that Chabad offers. Most likely such gifts will not be as easily accessible after leaving the college setting. One secret to succeeding in college is to learn how to manage time. Trust that time spent at Chabad is time well spent. It is also important to engage other Jewish students in Chabad's activities. For example, at a Shabbos meal do not hesitate to offer a seat to someone who may not know anyone at Chabad. Everyone must do their part in making sure all students feel welcomed at Chabad.

Name: Avraham Assaban

Major: Computer Engineering

Future Plans: MBA at Bar Ilan, Israel

Chabad has been a rock for me through the ups and downs of the last 4.5 years (yes 4.5 – I took a semester off). Their generosity, guidance and friendship have always been there for me. From the Sephardic Minyan to the Chevrotas that would lead to hour-long political discussions. I will never forget



all the happiness and great times that I was privileged to experience. Chabad will be the aspect of my college career that I will treasure and miss the most, except for the time a certain someone ran over my glasses in her go-kart during a Chabad outing. But they say all the bad occurrences are for the good.

I remember meeting Yisroel Slonim for the first time. I thought he was a girl (because he did not have his *upsherin* yet), I really did. Now, he is a weekly lecturer every Shabbat morning with Dvar Torahs that even the great sages of our day look up too. I am sorry I will not be here to see the younger children grow.

The people I have befriended and the memories I have will always be with me and has changed me for the best. I want to say thank you to Chabad for all that they have given me and for strengthening Jewish awareness in Binghamton – it is truly priceless. I wish only the growth of a strong Sephardic identity for the future.

Name: Gabriel Tzvi (Terrence) Axler

Major: History

Future Plans: Law School, Israel

I think the Jewish life in Binghamton is amazing however it is lacking in one major category, intramural sports. If I could change one thing with respect to Jewish life on campus, I would spend much more time developing a better intramural sports program. How many times has there been a speaker or a night dedicated to learning without as much as one program in preparation for an intramural season. We as athletes and Jews are presented with an amazing potential to welcome more Jews into the fold. I firmly believe that if we were to put out an amazing squad for each sport more people would talk about Chabad and therefore come to Chabad and ultimately become better Jews. Who is going to want to come for Friday night dinner if the Chabad team can't even hit a jump shot? I mean these are priorities that need to be addressed. Thusly, I would recruit the best Jewish athletes in the country – obviously they would be from out of state – and get them here, so that we could dominate intramurals and be a light unto the nations.



Name: Michael Blechner

Major: Biology

Future Plans: Sachler Medical School

My years at Binghamton University would never have been the same if not for the Chabad House. Chabad has created a special community separate from the one on campus. It is through this community that I have met my closest friends. Throughout the years, the Chabad House has offered me a chance to stay devoted to Judaism in an atmosphere very different than my past days in Yeshiva. I have grown and matured alongside Chabad, evident in my role as the grandfather of the groom at the mock wedding. With the care I've received from the Chabad House, I can truly say it is my "home away from home". I will always remember, and cherish, the Chabad House and all those who make it special.



Name: Gena Morgan Bofshever

Major: Biological Anthropology

Future Plans: Exercise Physiology

When I was younger, it was very easy to practice Judaism, as I lived with my parents who always made me go to Temple. My parents sent me to a Yeshiva for elementary school, in Long Island where I learned Hebrew and Jewish laws. In the sixth grade I started attending public school because my family lacked the financial means to continue funding my private education. It was then that my Judaism started becoming a proponent in my life that was only active while I was in Temple or while celebrating any holidays with my family. It seemed as though the older I got, the less interested I became in Judaism.

I decided to attend Binghamton, but never considered taking any courses in the Judaic Studies department as I was not interested in learning about my religion. I remember attending orientation where I selected my freshmen classes and I recall coming across elementary Hebrew in the course guide. I decided to take the course, as I figured I would receive an easy "A" based on my previous background in Hebrew. I signed up for the course and to my own surprise, fell in love with not only the language, but the people in my classes! I continued on in my Hebrew studies at Binghamton and decided to take advantage of Birthright Israel. After spending Shabbat in Jerusalem, and much time with Jews in Israel, I learned the deepest appreciation I had ever experienced for Judaism. When I returned from Israel, I realized how important and special the Chabad house was for Jewish students, as it provides a way to spend Shabbat and holidays with a family away from home, without being forced to do so.

Birthright Israel, religious courses and holiday services were most meaningful and enjoyable for me as a Jew, and that is all thanks to the Chabad House! If it weren't for the Chabad House, I think that many Jewish students would become disinterested in the religion, as it is hard to practice without a comfortable place to do so. I think that Jewish



life thrives at Binghamton University, and that is one of the reasons why I loved my four years here so much. My collegiate experience at Binghamton has positively affected my Jewish identity, which keeps growing stronger....

Name: Mitchell Cepler
Major: Accounting
Future Plans: Auditing at KPMG



The first time that I came to Chabad is perhaps the most critical juncture in my Jewish life at Binghamton. I recall walking to Chabad that first Friday evening, not exactly knowing where I was heading. All I knew was that Chabad was behind Newing. As I proceeded past Newing, I noticed gentlemen with kipot and ladies in long skirts and I knew I was on the right path. A warm handshake and optimistic smile welcomed me to Chabad for the first time; and I knew that I was welcome there.

Despite growing up in a predominantly Jewish town in Long Island, it was not until arriving at Chabad that I was able to truly embrace my Jewish identity. Learning about my religion, my heritage and my past opened up new doors to the future. Exploring the true meaning of being Jewish is what brought me to Chabad week after week (and the gefilte fish, too!).

The friendship and care that is shared within the community of Chabad is what adds so much value to the Binghamton campus. This is the true driving force that makes Chabad everyone's home away from home.

Name: Denise Hadas Cohen
Major: Biology Minor: Hebrew
Future Plans: New Jersey Dental School



I will never forget the first time I walked into Chabad my freshman year. It was pre-construction, when the main room was half the size, yet miraculously everyone fit in comfortably. Never before had I experienced such a beautiful occasion, sitting in a room with over a hundred Jews my age, coming together to enjoy Shabbat dinner. This also marked the beginning of my addiction to the Chabad, home-made challah. A little intimidated by what I thought a Chabad House would be like, I was pleasantly surprised and taken aback by how warm, loving, and open everyone was, regardless of level of observance. Chabad has strengthened my Jewish identity, and when people would ask me to go out on Friday nights to parties, I would proudly say I can't, I am going to Chabad because it is Shabbat. It felt great to explain to others what Shabbat is and to see how respectful other people are if you explain your beliefs to them. I have enjoyed every moment, from the Chanukah parties, to the Purim carnival, and especially Birthright Israel with Rabbi Slonim and Rabbi Creeger. As I prepare to graduate and move on to the next chapter of my life, I will never forget the wonderful times I had at Binghamton University, and more importantly at Chabad. The friends I made here will always be near and dear to my heart and B"H we will remain friends for many more years to come. I wish everyone a sincere Mazal Tov and best of luck in the future.

Name: Elizabeth Cohen
Major: Political Science and English
Future Plans: Aliyah to Israel



We've all figured out by the time we finish college that life is a system of crossroads. Binghamton is just another stop on this bus ride to aspiration. It's exciting and scary and nerve wracking. We take a turn at life's crossroads and hope for the best. Basically, college is one big fork in the road, one big decision masked in all these smaller decisions.

I'm able to look back at four years of university life while deciding my next move, and I'm feeling surprisingly calm. I'm ready to get back on that bus ride for more bus stops even if they are across the world, even if I'm not thinking twice about leaving Binghamton.

I think it's because I've realized there are some people who purposefully settle at the crossroads in order to help others cross it. Our Binghamton Chabad has done just that – it's been there for me at the fork in the road, giving me the backbone to securely pass through the crossroads and to move past what I've learned here in order to learn more.

Someone has to be there to help us get on with our lives, past this Binghamton 'stop'. I am so grateful I am able to get past this place having known it through the vision of our Chabad House.

Sometimes, it's the people who make a place holy.

Sometimes, amongst the longing for greater (and warmer) places, even Binghamton, NY, can feel like home.

Name: Ben Darfler
Major: Computer Science
Future Plans: Work in Binghamton, then Masters in Computer Science at Cornell



Chabad

Dusk rolls in, candles burn, Shabbos brings its peace.
 We soothe and sigh together as the workweek comes to cease.
 One foot leads the other, through campus to Murray Hill,
 We move so ever gracefully, as sunset starts to spill.

Chabad is where our feet do lead, as if with minds their own.
 We're pulled along by instinct, by comfort, warmth, and home.
 Services, and setting up, kiddush, wash, and bread,
 Salad, singing, soup, and speech, the smiles that are had.

The weeks fly by, and soon we see, they've morphed into a year,
 But every time we look around, we realize why we're here.
 We're drawn away from overwork, the crazy college norm,
 And find ourselves immersed, in the calm within the storm.

So thanks must go to grand Chabad, and those that fill its walls
 Thanks for Shabbos, and *chagim*, for pizzas and for Saul
 Thanks for good times and through bad, for xbox and ping pong
 And to knowing with sincerity, we are all missed when we're gone.

Thanks for Four Wonderful Years.

Name: Nir M. Gadon
Major: B.S. in Management, MIS and Global Management
Future Plans: Hofstra Law School



When I first gave word to my Rabbis and teachers that I was going to Binghamton University, they were terrified. Many doubted the Jewish culture and were concerned that many young people can get lost in the crowd. I found through my time here that establishing and maintaining one's Jewish identity in Binghamton is not only possible but also facilitated by the Chabad House and the programs they run. I feel that Chabad has brought together many people on this campus and always makes us feel comfortable during the welcome BBQ, Shabbat 1000, and the ever memorable Goodbye Shabbaton.

I would like to see in the near future that Chabad would be even more involved in campus life. I encourage students to continue not only to attend Chabad for services and activities, but also to support by scheduling and promoting events to further Jewish life on campus and bring more people to realize that a Jewish life is within their grasp.

Name: Amy Esther Gordon
Major: Linguistics
Future Plans: Wish I knew....



Being raised in a traditional household, I knew the Jewish identity my parents instilled in me was very important to hold on to when I came to college. Even though I did not start attending Chabad until late in my freshmen year the first time that I attended Chabad was the road to a new journey. Who knew that being asked by a girl on my floor to come to Chabad would open my mind to a different lifestyle? As the weeks went by and I saw more familiar faces, I started to feel more at home. Rabbis Slonim and Creeger, Rivky and Dina, were very welcoming with a smile and a "Good Shabbos", which was one of the main reasons I felt so special. They were very warm each time I came and they even remembered my name after introducing myself just once. (I guess I have that affect on people.) The friendships I formed made my transition that much easier. I felt like being Jewish was a lot easier with these friends around me. I know that there is a reason that I met these people and everyday I come across new realizations why they are my friends. Sitting in the sukkah eating breakfast, learning with someone (or the most important) having a slumber party with my best friends every Shabbos are just some of the memories I can thank Chabad for giving me.

Chabad House has made my years at Binghamton University unforgettable. My time spent at Chabad either learning, running the Purim carnival raffle, and singing and talking in the kitchen Thursday nights while baking birthday cakes for Shabbos has always made me feel like an important member of the Chabad family. Finding the time to bang out every book in Chabad and vacuum all the chairs has taught me the true cleaning experience for Pesach. There are no words to describe the impact Chabad House has made on my life. Accepting me from the first day I walked in there until the last day I walk out as a student will be something that I will keep in my heart forever. I would just like to say "Thank You" for everything that you have done for making my religious journey a positive one that I will keep alive forever.

Mazal Tov to the Class of 2004!

Name: Danit Greenfield
Major: Human Development & Judaic Studies
Future Plans: MA in School Counseling



When I first came to Binghamton, I expected Chabad to be one room with a small group of people gathered for Shabbat dinner. Little did I know that I would be sitting having dinner surrounded by a few hundred people, many of whom have become my closest friends. Chabad has created a warm and inviting environment that has truly enhanced my college experience. I'll always cherish the memories of Shabbat at Chabad, the Simchat Torah celebrations, the incredible classes, and of course the Women's Cabaret.

I'm grateful to the Chabad House for all that they have done and continue to do for the Binghamton Jewish community. Thank You for four wonderful years!

Name: Miriam Gross
Major: Anthropolgy
Future Plans: Physical Therapy Tract



The Chabad House has enhanced my college experience in so many ways. While living on campus for my first two years, the Chabad house gave me an escape from the daily stresses of dorm life, classes and tests. It allowed me to maintain my Judaism through Shabbat services and dinner, educational classes and the multitude of activities that are planned all week long. In addition to improving my life on campus, it was at Chabad that I decided to move in with housemates for the next two years off campus. Living with my seven housemates, who like me went to Chabad regularly, has made my college experience unforgettable and certainly more fun than I would have ever imagined.

I would like to thank Chabad for helping me maintain my Judaism on campus as well as off at the Shabbat on the West Sides, and by helping me, inadvertently, move in with seven amazing housemates.

Name: Eric Katz
Major: Accounting
Future Plans: CPA at Deloitte



In high school I was told not to go to Binghamton because I will become less observant and lose my connection to Judaism. I laughed at that statement because I went to Yeshiva all of my life and grew up in an Orthodox home, so I thought nothing could phase me. Then I showed up to my dorm on the first day of freshman year and met my roommate, "Spike". Besides for the infamous "mezuzah incident" and other minor episodes, we got along really well. However, for the first time in my life I found myself being questioned about my beliefs and rituals. I came to realize that I wanted and needed to understand more about my Judaism, so I started taking advantage of all that the Chabad House has to offer. My Judaism has been strengthened by attending the weekly parsha classes, beit midrash, and my "almost perfect" shacharit attendance record for the past 2 years. No one forced me to learn, pray, or keep kosher, yet I enjoyed doing these things so much more than I used to.

It's hard to say what I will miss most about Chabad. While the Purim Carnivals, Mitzvah Marathons, and the lettuce salad will always hold a special place in my heart, it is the relationships I have established through Chabad that I will always remember.

Name: Joshua Koegel
Major: Marketing
Future Plans: Marketing research and design at large Telecommunications Co.



Coming from a year of yeshiva study in Israel, Binghamton University did not seem like a practical option for me in continuing my education and growth into adulthood. When the idea of applying to secular colleges such as BU came up in conversation with my teachers, I was told that it was not the ideal place for a "yeshiva kid" to be. So after much debate, Queens College is where I enrolled. Sometime about halfway through my first semester at Queens, a friend who was attending Binghamton invited me for a Shabbat. When I walked into the Chabad House for the first time I was taken aback. It was so pleasant and full of WARMTH. The Slonim and Creeger families seemed to care so much about their guests. This made me realize that my yiddishkite could not only survive but grow even stronger in this type of atmosphere. To make a long story shorter, right when I got home from that weekend, I applied to BU and was enrolled here the next semester.

The idea that a family could sacrifice what a large Jewish community has to offer to join the BU community is unfathomable to me. Here we have two families that fall into that category. Without them, we as a community could not be thriving and growing by leaps and bounds. I would like to thank them for all that they have done for me and making me want to be a better Jew and a better person.

Name: Jasmin Kovarsy
Major: Political Science
Future Plans: Graduate School



My relationship with Chabad of Binghamton began rather casually. Freshman year, absorbed in many new pursuits, I made time some Friday nights to tend to an old one: my Jewish identity. With the memory of Friday nights at home fresh in my mind, spending it with students was an altogether different experience for me. While I had spoken to Rabbi and Mrs. Slonim before, I did not think that either of them really could keep track of me with hundreds of other people in the room. Two years later, I was surprised and delighted that they remembered me when it came time to plan a food drive that would culminate in building a huge menorah out of cans of food. I realized that I could bridge the two sides of my life here at Binghamton by using my role as a community service chair in my sorority Sigma Delta Tau to work with Chabad for the greater Jewish community. Since that event, I was lucky enough to do an internship with Chabad last semester, where I learned so much.

My internship responsibilities ranged from mailings to data entry to peeling endless potatoes, but the tasks at hand were not important in and of themselves, but rather for the end they were for: a mitzvah.

Through this experience I learned an invaluable lesson: To help your fellow man, to

rekindle someone's spirit and give them a sense of belonging and strength is worth any type of work. I learned countless other lessons through this semester as well, all leading back to the importance of mitzvot. To have Chabad working so hard for the good of this campus makes Binghamton University truly blessed. Oh and did I mention I also got married with Chabad last semester? ;)

Name: Sara Eve Landman
Major: Psychology and Sociology
Future Plans: Otzma Fellowship, Israel. Education & Communal Service



The third Landman sibling to attend Binghamton University, I was at first nervous that involvement in the Jewish community would mean living in the shadows of my active brothers. How naive I was then, to fear that my own footprints could be a replication of another's. The Jewish community at Binghamton University has taught the three Landman children that every individual has a unique contribution to make to every context and relationship. David Landman connected Jews in the fraternity world, Josh Landman started the daily minyan, and although unsure as to how my actions will be defined, I thank Chabad and Hillel for graciously providing me with a unique space to be heard.

What I have found most intriguing about being Jewish at University is that those who identify are naturally, free of charge so to speak, placed into a community that is strong and supportive. As upon returning from a semester study abroad at Hebrew University, a potentially lonely transition back to the United States was quickly appeased when many shared with me their similar emotional attachments to and experiences in the Holy Land. For this occasion and others, I would like to thank all who have played such a positive role in my college experience. Thank you for your friendship, your smile, your warmth, your expression, and your wisdom. As you continue to provide a unique space for newcomers, I hope that the love, acceptance, and hope that transpire will guide your footprints on an exhilarating trail.

Name: Stephanie Leight
Major: Finance & MIS
Future Plans: Ernst & Young, LLP



The Chabad House of Binghamton has been an important part of my life over the past four years. I was hesitant to attend at first, but luckily I did and never looked back. I have met so many wonderful people during my time here that its hard to believe I won't be seeing them all every week. The friendships I've made will last the rest of my life. I have also had the opportunity to take part in numerous events. I have most enjoyed the classes I've taken and helping for and attending Shabbos meals. No where else can preparing food for over two hundred people every week be so much fun and so rewarding.

However, all of the events that I have participated in were tremendously fun and memorable.

Chabad is one of those things that we tend to take for granted. Most of us do not truly appreciate how special it is until its too late. I hope that all of the students who still have time here will take advantage of everything it has to offer. One of the reasons why Chabad is so special is because of the families that work so hard to make it function. These people have been inspiring role models to me, who will no doubt continue to do amazing things in the future.

Chabad has enriched my life in countless ways. I feel privileged to have had it in my life and sincerely thank the families and students involved from the bottom of my heart.

Name: Marc A. Lessner
Major: History and Political Science
Minor: International Studies
Adjunct: Management Future Plans: Law School, Venture Capitalism



When I came to Binghamton I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Coming from a "social bubble" of Yeshiva High School, I entered a world of diversity and opportunity. When the Binghamton chapter of my life began to be scripted, I was filled with uncertainty. However, as the concluding chapter is near complete, I found my four year experience to be the best years of my life and most productive.

My years in the Bing were spent learning, partying, and with extracurricular activities. I realized that the college campus is a microcosm of the world and actions on campus can and did affect the outside world. As a result, I decided to become involved in many organizations and activities. A very special place in my heart is devoted to Chabad, for they exemplify the potential of the Jewish people. Day in and day out, the Chabad house creates programs and opens its doors to welcome any person: Jewish or not, for some good Jewish soul food or a place to just relax. The power of warmth makes me and others feel at home and exemplify the profound importance of repairing the world and making it better for all generations and those to come. As in the great words of Albert Einstein: "The world is a dangerous place. Not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen." Chabad exemplifies all the good that Einstein suggests can be born from action and deeds, and successfully brings each student, in his or her own respective way to do some form of good. For this the world, Jewish people, students and faculty of Binghamton and myself are grateful for. From my days in Newing and CIW to the Westside at 20 Front, Chabad always made sure my life was made easier. May you always continue to spread the Chabad joy on campus!

Name: Yaron Markfeld
Major: Chemistry and Rocket Science
Future Plans: Med School (or Ninja)



From the first day that I started attending Binghamton University, the bond with my Jewish identity only grew stronger. Growing up going to Yeshiva all my life, with the exception of two months at Lawrence, I have had constant links to Judaism and my Jewish past. But coming to college, for the first time, I started to feel nervous about how life would be changed not being in the Jewish environment that I was used to. This only helped solidify my role in being part of the vast Jewish community that Binghamton offers. Right away our first “Jew-crew” was formed with myself, Eric Katz, Michael Blechner, Oren Kashi, Warren Skydell and Enoch Law. Being away from the constant watch of my Rabbis at HAFTR only made me want to be that much more involved in Chabad and all the Jewish events that I could possibly help with or attend. Also, I was one of the few Jewish players on my hockey team here at Binghamton, and this truly had a great impact on me because it was so important to me to set an example and to not make a “*chilul Hashem*” (desecrate G-d’s name by acting in a way unseemly for a Jew). My friends and I really made the most of everything we could and Binghamton helped me in turn become that much closer with my own Jewish identity.

Some of my most memorable events included helping with the Purim Carnival, showing off my mitzvah skills in the mitzvah marathon, and doing everything I could to help set and clean up at the Shabbat 1000. But most memorable will be the Erev Shabbat meals in Chabad with my best friends and my girlfriend, Natalie. It was here, in my home away from home, where I got to spend Shabbat with family in Binghamton, listen to fascinating speeches, sing and enjoy the lettuce salad that I’d have to basically smuggle in order to get a second serving of. It was also in Chabad where I became the most feared and recognized ping pong player in Chabad history. But looking past the ping pong, Chabad plays such an important role not only in Binghamton University but in each of our lives. Giving us that feeling of Shabbat and Jewish unity at a time when we are away from our homes and did not have that security really made Binghamton as special as it could have been. Chabad gives a secular school a chance to have an active Jewish community which has played a huge role in my life and which I will truly miss when I graduate.

Some events I’d like to see added to Jewish life is maybe Chabad ping pong tournaments, Jiu Jitsu and parsha night, some wacky events like post Shabbos Taboo and Vodka Oneg, or **Super Guys Night**, where the ladies go downstairs and the guys get the crazy cakes and ultra fun and maybe we can have a sleepover party too. But in all seriousness, Chabad makes Binghamton perfect, and as long as it continues the way it is I can only hope others can have the same special experience and incredible four (and for some, five or six) years that Chabad had given me.

Name: Livia Navie
Major: Psychology Minor: Biology
Future Plans: PA, SUNY Stony Brook



When I first started school here at Binghamton University, I did not know much about the Jewish religion. My father would call me each Friday and tell me to go to the Chabad house. I was extremely timid and did not know many Jewish college students who went to Chabad, and so I lied to my father for about three weeks before I could find someone to join me. Despite the fact that I cannot read Hebrew, I had a great a time. I met students that I had been taking classes with, but never had the courage to approach. The Chabad house opened many doors for me. It enabled me to not only learn more about my religion, but to also become involved in Jewish events.

Not everything the Chabad house does is directly related to religion.

There are cooking activities, arts and crafts, boating and even paintball.

What I enjoy most about the Chabad house, is helping cook for various events, and taking part in their Friday night services. This summer I will be continuing my education at SUNY Stony Brook. I can only hope that the Chabad house there has as wonderful and knowledgeable staff. These past few years would not have been the same without the friendships I have made through partaking in the events sponsored by the Chabad House.

Name: Aliza Diana Nelson
Major: Psychology & Studio Art
Future Plans: Interior Design



As I look back and reflect on the past four years many great experiences come to mind. Shabbat afternoons in Oneida, arts festivals and snowboarding, painting and researching, late night coffee runs and Wal-Mart trips, and of course lots and lots of laughs. Its all been amazing! Coming from a yeshiva high school I chose Binghamton because I wanted to leave the traditional orthodox bubble to find a purer and stronger Jewish identity. Some people may have thought going to Binghamton would cause the exact opposite of this but they were wrong. It was within our little brain and downtown Binghamton, independent of my easy Jewish life that I found the greatest strength and encouragement to believe and practice my faith. In large part this strength is reflective of the different people I met at BU. I won’t name anyone because I could just go on forever about each of you but, as all my friends and of course Kenny, know, you have each taught me an unbelievable amount about life, friendship, how to question and how to act. I respect all of you for your unique voice and I love and will miss you all very much. In a large part, my relationships would not be nearly as influential as they were if it weren’t for taking part in Jewish activities like Hillel and Chabad. All the services and meals that were always ready and waiting for me, all the classes and events – they exposed me to many different friends and helped me deepen my appreciation and understanding of what Judaism is. I really feel lucky to have been a part of such a close and yet large Jewish community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chabad for the continuous love and support they provide. We are all very lucky to have you. And to all my friends it’s been a great time and I thank

you for the experiences we have shared, congratulations and good luck with everything you choose hopefully we can all remain in contact many many years past our time at Binghamton. Shalom.

Name: Michelle Pomerantz
Major: Human Development
Future Plans: Masters Degree in Elementary and Special Education



My first encounter with Chabad couldn’t have been more telling of how my experience at Binghamton would play out. A weekend visit during my senior year of high school not only turned out to be Shabbat 1000, an event I would end up co-chairing my four years here, but also the same weekend that one of my now closest friends also happened to be visiting.

Not only have I found an amazing group of friends through the Jewish community here at Binghamton, but I have also been lucky enough to have established an amazing relationship with both the Slonim and Creeger families. Their warmth and generosity have not only enriched my college experience but have made a huge impact in my life. My involvement in Chabad activities, events and classes have taught me more than I could ever have imagined. I know that even though I will not be close by, I will still have a family in Binghamton. Words can not begin to describe how much I want to thank you for everything you have done for me.

Name: Suzanne (Sue) Schwartzberg
Major: English Minor: Business
Future Plans: Public Relations



My name may not be one you recognize. But, four years ago, I went to Chabad every Shabbos. I was an active Hillel member. I too braved those long walks to the Union and the Chabad House. I too, even went on Birthright Israel. But, by the end of freshman year, the gray skies of Binghamton, the independence, took its toll on me. I am still searching for the exact reason, but I stopped believing. Not in Hashem, but in my connection to the Jewish world. All around me were other ideas, than the ones I was constantly taught as a child.

Then there was a realization. I could either go to services just because everyone was doing it or take some time on my own and like I did when I was on birthright, find my place and where I wanted, not my parents, but where I wanted Judaism to fit into my future. So I experienced Passover in Belgium and befriended people of every religion, race, and ethnicity.

Contrary to what I previously believed, those people to this day are some of the most amazing people I have ever encountered. I spent nights debating with them realizing how little I truly knew about my own culture and religion.

So this semester, I became re-involved with Jewish organizations. BUT, this time around I embraced a different mindset. I would no longer try to be as Jewish as I could be as my freshman year in order to be accepted. Instead, I would be as open minded as I could be. More like when I was a wide eyed eight year old at Hebrew school instead of an 18 year old freshman in college that appeared to be experienced with the Jewish world.

You know what happened? I was accepted with open arms. And by allowing myself to understand and appreciate my weaknesses, by meeting and re-meeting people this semester, I realized that the Jewish people can also be some of the most wonderful people I have encountered. I was Jewish and I wanted to learn and that was all that matters.

It’s scary to admit that. That I can believe in something I don’t know all the reasons or explanations for. Yet people exist, have existed for the past four years that want to help me find my answers.

That’s when I realized how truly special the Binghamton University Jewish community really is.

Name: Benny Spiewak
Major: English, Literature and Rhetoric
Future Plans: Advertising



For those of you graduating from Binghamton University this year – congratulations, not only have you successfully made your way through the rigorous curriculum demanded by the “Ivy of the SUNYs,” but, even more impressive, you have effectively navigated your way through the intricacies of the General Education requirements. For those of you who will be returning to BU next year and have not yet completed this supposedly simple set of guidelines (remember that 3 week spa you had to attend following the insomnia that was Freshman Orientation?), here are some tips on how I have been able to fulfill these requirements through Chabad:

A Aesthetic Perspective – Helping prepare for meals, I’ve learned the coolest ways to cut up a million tomatoes and how to make a stack of set tables blend into a room (not to mention which side the fork goes on).

G Global Interdependencies – While Chabad does amazing things within the Chabad House, the work they do does not happen solely within its walls. Whether running meaningful events on campus, providing for starving college students over on the West Side or running Birthright trips on the other side of the world, Chabad knows how to help Jewish Students where they are.

N Social Science – I’ve learned that one of the best ways to impress a *yiddishe maydl* is by carrying her chair over to her table for her. I’ve also learned that spilling soup on her new skirt is probably not the best way. (As far as getting the rest down to a science, I think that’s one place Chabad has failed me.)

O Oral Communication – Rabbi Slonim has often helped me improve my public speaking skills, allowing me to make important announcements and then complimenting them with his additions of minor details, such as the date, time and even the things I’ve

forgotten to announce.

W Wellness – Chabad has helped create and maintain the strong and vibrant Jewish community that exists on our campus. It seems as though every year I return, eager to see the new extensions added over the summer, there is a need for another expansion.

Y Physical Activity – Of course, reminding me about the importance of Not Rolling on Shabbos.

Hopefully I've given a clear guide to the infamous Gen-Ed requirements necessary to matriculate at Binghamton University. Even if not, I'm sure it's better than any explanation you've gotten from the Academic Advising office.

Name: Kenny Weiss
Major: Computer Science and Math
Future Plans: Graduate School at University of Maryland, College Park



What can I say about the past four years that has not already been said?

After a year studying in Israel, I arrived in Binghamton armed with my Yeshiva's concern about the 'secular devil' that is college.

To my great relief, I found a vibrant Jewish community with a wealth of opportunities to offer. From the 7:00 AM wakeup calls for davening that practically forced my first roommate to move out, to the endless kosher kitchen shifts, I was able to stay involved in the community.

Despite the thousands of students that Chabad helps every year, I always felt important and a part of what was going on. On Friday nights, after a busy week of school there were always good friends to sit with and usually a cheerful request to help out in the kitchen. Random seniorly advice: pasta salad (w/o the vegetables) tastes great in the soup.

I remember when Chabad was half its present size, and there were so many people that I had to sit outside (for some reason, it never occurred to me to pick a seat before they were all taken).

I was also fortunate enough to be involved during the JSU's transition to an official Hillel two years ago (why couldn't we keep the couch?)

I will always remember the friends that I made and my great home away from home in Binghamton.

Name: Tamara "Tah" Weissman
Major: Judaic Studies
Future Plans: Masters in Education



Before coming to Binghamton, I was cautioned by certain individuals about the Jewish life on campus. Some of you might find this surprising, but I came into this university having prepared myself for a small, inactive Jewish community. At the time, I was not aware of the spiritual heights that I would be able to reach during my three years at Binghamton University.

Having come to Binghamton right after years of Yeshiva schooling and my year in Israel, I had a strong connection to Judaism. I have always been a firm believer in the importance of sharing Torah knowledge with others, which accounts for the creation of "Torah Time with Tah" a program that allows students to teach each other topics in Judaism. Learning from my peers and taking part in others' learning about Judaism are memories over which I will smile and reminisce fondly.

Summarizing my experience at Binghamton University would be incomplete without mentioning Chabad House and all their efforts to augment the Jewish life in the Binghamton area. Anyone that is familiar with the scene can easily recount a list of things they do each day for the students on campus and the members of the Binghamton community to help Jews maintain or create a connection to Judaism. I have learned from the Chabad staff how important it is to show concern for all individuals with whom I come into contact and to do so in the nicest way possible.

To this day I cannot understand why people were afraid of me attending Binghamton. There were times when I had to take initiative and surround myself with the right environment, but I feel that that has only strengthened my Judaism. Besides, when I needed guidance or encouragement, I definitely had amazing role models from whom to learn!

Name: Shira Zeif
Major: English
Future Plans: MA Early Childhood Ed.



When I first came to Binghamton as a freshman, it was a Friday, and that night I found my way to the Chabad House, expecting to find services, a quiet meal, and hopefully to meet a few new people. What I got was an unforgettable Shabbos with a wonderful family, and around 200 other students. It was there that I met people who have since become some of my best friends, friends that I know will last forever.

While the major events that Chabad organizes annually like the Purim carnival and Shabbat for a 1000 are absolutely amazing and continue to draw together hundreds of people in celebration, what I will most likely never forget are the smaller and subtler details that make the students feel special; making sure that every single person who comes to Friday night dinner receives a birthday cake, as well as a card sent to them wishing them a happy birthday; making sure that absolutely everyone has a place to sit and eat, even if it means setting up a whole new table right on the spot; letting us know each Shabbos via email that we are welcome to come over on Shabbos afternoon *anytime* that we can make it (especially helpful for a non-morning person like myself who didn't actually make it to the davening too often!). Chabad at Binghamton makes the students feel as though we aren't merely visitors to their house on a weekly basis, but that we are an extended part of their family, welcome to come and hang out at any time

(and I'd like to thank you for personally allowing me to perfect my ping-pong skills at the table downstairs). On a larger scale, Chabad has even brought a Shabbos meal to the students who live off-campus, like myself, making sure that we know that they are always there for us, no matter where we are.

Chabad has been a very important part of my college experience, and it has helped me grow as an individual and as a Jew. The last four years have just flown by, and as I leave, I know that I will take these experiences with me into the future, and that Chabad will always be a part of my life in some form. Thank you for everything (especially the potato and pasta salads which I've never had better anywhere else!). I hope that you can continue to change and enrich the lives of countless other students who will pass through the school, and help them grow as I have. I won't say goodbye, but see you soon, as I'm sure I'll be back to visit Chabad in the near future!

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Your Shavuot Holiday Guide

May 25-27, 2004 / Sivan 6-7 5764

What is Shavuot?

Shavuot is the second of the three major festivals (Passover being the first and Sukkot the third) and comes exactly fifty days after Passover. The Torah was given by G-d to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai over 3,300 years ago. Every year on this day we renew our acceptance of G-d's gift.

The word Shavuot means "weeks": It marks the completion of the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot (the 'Omer' period) during which the Jewish people prepared themselves for the giving of the Torah. During this time they cleansed themselves of the scars of slavery and became a holy nation ready to enter into an eternal covenant with G-d with the giving of the Torah.

Shavuot also means "oaths", with the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people and G-d exchanged oaths, forming an everlasting covenant, not to forsake one another.

What is the Torah?

The Torah is composed of two parts: the Written Law and the Oral Law. The written Torah contains the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings. Together with the Written Torah, Moses was also given the Oral Law which explains and clarifies the Written law. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation and eventually transcribed in the Talmud and Midrash.

The word 'Torah' means instruction or guide. The word 'mitzvah' means both commandment and connection. There are 613 commandments. The positive commandments ('do'), numbering 248, are equivalent to the number of organs in the human body. The 365 negative commandments ('don't do') are equivalent to the number of blood vessels in the human body.

Through the study of Torah and fulfillment of mitzvahs we connect ourselves and our environment to G-d. G-d's purpose in creating the world is that we sanctify all of creation, imbuing it with holiness and spirituality.



The Role of Children

Our Sages said that before G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people, He demanded guarantors. The Jews made a number of suggestions, all rejected by G-d, until they declared, "Our children will be our guarantors that the Jewish people will cherish and observe the Torah"; G-d immediately accepted them and agreed to give the Torah.

When the Torah is read in the synagogue on Shavuot, G-d is actually giving the Torah anew. Therefore every Jewish man, woman and especially children should make every effort to be present in a synagogue on Wednesday, May 26 2004, as the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah.

The Giving of the Torah

The giving of the Torah was a far-reaching spiritual event - one that touched the essence of the Jewish soul then and for all time. Our Sages have compared it to a wedding between G-d and the Jewish people. One of the many names of Shavuot is the Day of the Great Oath, (the word *shavuah* also means oath). On this day G-d swore eternal devotion to us, and we in turn pledged everlasting loyalty to Him.



On this day we received a gift (*matan*) from Above which we could not have achieved with our own limited faculties. We received the ability to reach and touch the Divine; not only to be cultivated human beings, but Divine human beings who are capable of rising above and beyond the limitations of nature.

Why Wasn't the Torah Given in Israel?

The Torah was given freely, in an ownerless public place. If it had been given in the land of Israel, the nations of the world would say that they have no portion in it. Anyone who wishes to properly accept it is welcome to do so.

Why was Mount Sinai chosen to be the site for the giving of the Torah? The conventional answer is that the choice of Mount Sinai was to teach us humility, since Mount Sinai was the most humble of all mountains. If so, why was it not given in a low lying valley? Surely that would have been a stronger lesson in humility?

Hence, we learn that a Jew must be able to distinguish between being proud and being arrogant. Arrogance is distasteful. Being proud of one's roots is a virtue. The Torah therefore, was given on a humble mountain.

Additional Names for Shavuot

Shavuot is also called *Atzeret* meaning, The Completion, because together with Passover it forms the completion of a unit. We gained our freedom on Passover in order to receive the Torah on Shavuot.

Another name for Shavuot is *Yom Habikurim* or the Day of the First Fruits. In an expression of thanks to G-d, beginning on Shavuot, each farmer in the Land of Israel brought an offering to the Temple of the first wheat, barley, grapes, figs pomegranates, olives and dates that grew in his field.

Finally, Shavuot is also called *Chag HaKatzir*, the Festival of the Harvest, because wheat, the last of the grains to be ready to be cut, was harvested at this time of the year.

Learning on Shavuot Night

On the first night of Shavuot (this year Tuesday, May 25, 2004), Jews throughout the world observe the centuries-old custom of conducting an all-night vigil dedicated to Torah learning. One explanation for this tradition is that the Jewish people did not rise early on the day G-d gave the Torah, and that it was necessary for G-d Himself to awaken them. To compensate for their behavior, Jews have accepted upon themselves the custom of remaining awake all night.

The Ten Commandments

The holiday of Shavuot is the day on which we celebrate the great revelation of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, 3314 years ago. You stood at the foot of the mountain. Your grandparents and great-grandparents before them. The souls of all Jews, from all times came together to hear the Ten Commandments from G-d himself.

This year, on Wednesday, May 26 2004, go to your local synagogue to hear the Ten Commandments and reaffirm the covenant with G-d and His Torah.

Since we all stood at Mount Sinai, we must all reaffirm our commitment. Babies, young children, the elderly – all that are able should attend.

The Book of Ruth

In many synagogues the book of Ruth is read on the second day of Shavuot. There are several reasons for this custom:

A) Shavuot is the birth-day and *yahrtzeit* (day of passing) of King David, and the book of Ruth records his

ancestry. Ruth and her husband Boaz were King David's great-grandparents.

B) The scenes of harvesting, described in the book of Ruth are appropriate to the Festival of Harvest.

C) Ruth was a sincere convert who embraced Judaism with all her heart. On Shavuot all Jews were converts having accepted the Torah and all of its precepts.

Adorning the Home with Greenery and Flowers

It is customary on Shavuot to adorn the home and synagogue with fruits, flowers and greens. The reason is that in the time of the Temple, the first fruits of harvest were given on Shavuot. As well, our Sages related that although Mount Sinai was situated in a desert, when the Torah was given the mountain bloomed and sprouted flowers.

NOTE: All arrangements should be done early on Tuesday, before the onset of the Holiday, to respect the sanctity of Shavuot.

Eating Dairy Foods

It is customary to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. There are a number of reasons for this custom:

With the giving of the Torah the Jews now became obligated to observe the laws of Kashruth. As the Torah was given on Shabbat no cattle could be slaughtered nor could utensils be koshered, and thus on that day they ate dairy.

Another reason is that the Torah is likened to milk. The Hebrew word for milk is *chalav*. When the numerical value of each of the letters in the word *chalav* are added together - 8; 30; 2 - the total is forty. Forty is the number of days Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Torah.



SHAVUOT CALENDAR 5764-2004

Times shown for Binghamton only

Date		Time
May 25	Light Candles, blessings 1&2*	8:10 pm
May 26	Listen to the Ten Commandments	
May 26	Light Candles, blessings 1&2**	9:21 pm
May 27	Yizkor Memorial Service	
May 27	Yom Tov Ends at	9:22 pm

* If lighting after sunset, light only from a pre-existing flame.

** Light after time indicated, and only from a pre-existing flame.

A pre-existing flame is a flame burning continuously since the onset of the festival, such as a pilot light, gas or candle flame

Candle Lighting Blessings

1) BA-RUCH A-TAH ADO-NAI E-LO-HE-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM ASHER KID-E-SHA-NU BE-MITZ-VO-TAV VETZI-VA-NU LE-HAD-LIK NER SHEL YOM TOV.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the holiday light.

2) BA-RUCH A-TAH ADO-NAI E-LO-HE-NU ME-LECH HA-OLAM SHE-HECHE-YA-NU VE-KI-YE-MA-NU VE-HIGI-A-NU LIZ-MAN HA-ZEH.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Chabad HAPPENINGS

Photos by
Rabbi Yitzi Creeger



Students enjoyed **Poetry Night**, one in a series of the popular **Chabad Cafe** nights.



Ben Cutler of the "Chabad Houses" takes on the competition in the Competitive **Intramural Softball League**.

Rivky Slonim kicks off another series of the **Jewish Learning Institute** on Monday, April 26. The classes are held on Mondays, 7:30pm. The current topic is **Seasons of the Soul: The Jewish Life Cycle**. Anyone interested in attending the course should contact Chabad House at 797-0015.

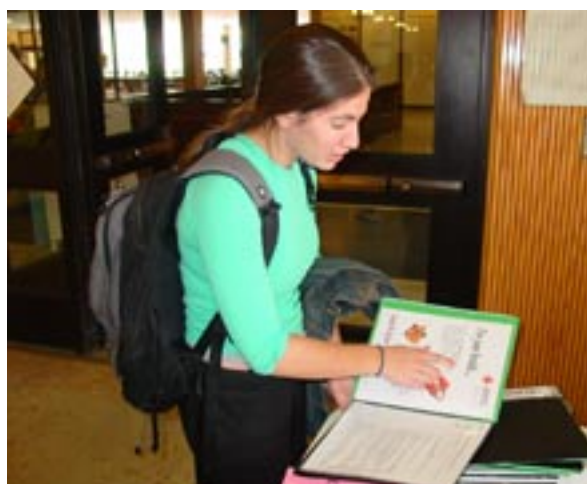


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Chabad House was privileged to have renowned artist Beryl Brenner lead a **stained glass workshop** in which all participants learned a lot and had great fun while creating a beautiful keepsake.

Responding to requests from the regional Red Cross who are experiencing an all time low in their blood banks, Chabad House held a very successful **blood drive** under the able leadership of Beth Etra.



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Chabad Alumni News

Mazel Tovs!

Class of '97

■ Avraham and Yutty Polinger announce the birth of their daughter, Esther Leah, on Adar 2, February 24, 2004.

Class of '98

■ Beth Applebome announces her engagement to Avi Cohen; a November 21, 2004 marriage is planned. Beth is an assistant editor at Fairchild Publications and Avi is a corporate lawyer with a Manhattan firm.

■ Beth (Tova Hadassah) Alexander announces her engagement to Yoel Robinson; a June 9, 2004 wedding is planned. They hope to make their home in Yerushalayim.

Class of '01

■ Marave Silber announces her engagement to Avi Herbstman; a June 6 wedding is planned. They plan to make their home in Morristown, NJ.

Class of '03

■ Judy (Benzel) and Netanel Mazor announce the birth of their daughter, Sara, on March 28, 2004.

Send us your Mazel Tovs so we can share them with the world!!

Have a picture of your Mazel Tov? Send it together with your details to rabbityitz@chabadofbinghamton.com and we'll put it up on the new Simchas and Such section of our webpage!

Chabad expresses sincere condolences to

Shari Tellerman Bloomberg '90
and

Andrea Tellerman Alexander '94

upon the untimely loss of their mother.

May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem

Diamonds and Fish

As told by Yanki Tauber

Once upon a time there was a poor man who heard that in a faraway land, on the other side of the deep and dangerous sea, there is a place where diamonds were as plentiful as dust -- one need only bend down, scoop them up, and fill one's pockets.

After a long and arduous journey, the man arrived in this wondrous land. Everything that had been said about it was true! Diamonds of all sizes were strewn around everywhere -- even the sand was comprised of billions of tiny glittering gems. A group of children gathered to watch the strange stranger kneeling on the ground and stuffing his pockets with stones and pebbles, but our friend was too busy to notice them.

To celebrate the end of his poverty, the traveler ordered a luxurious dinner in the most expensive restaurant in town. Feeling generous, he handed the waiter a small-sized stone and exhorted him to keep the change. Needless to say, he spent that entire night washing dishes in the kitchen to pay for his extravagance.

He quickly learned that these pebbles, each of which would be worth millions back home, were utterly worthless. Here, the currency with which people paid for goods and services was fish. In fact, few people remembered that fish were originally consumed as a food. No one was bothered by the stench which emanated from their wallets, pocket-books and money closets. Indeed, a reeking establishment exuded the sweet aura of old money.

Once he overcame the disappointment of his lost dream, our traveler was revealed to be a most resourceful and ambitious individual. He worked hard, invested wisely, and before long he was one of the wealthiest people in the land. His businesses were headquartered in the most rancid section of

old downtown and his private vaults held thousands of tons of fish.

Finally, it was time to return home. He telegraphed his family: "Am rich. We shall never want for anything in our lives. Prepare triumphant homecoming." He loaded his fortune on a fleet of ships, and set sail for his hometown.

Family and friends, dressed in their best, awaited him eagerly at the seaport. Of course, there was nothing that could be done with his shiploads of rotted fish except sail back a few miles from shore and dump them into the sea.

But later that day, as he was undressing for bed, a few specks of dust were shaken out of his trouser pockets and sparkled on the floor of his home. He and his family never again wanted for anything in their lives.

The soul, in its abode on high, hears wondrous tales of a faraway land. To get there, it must cross a deep and treacherous sea. Great treasures, it is told, are literally free for the taking in this place. A coin given to charity, a prayer uttered, a candle lit to usher in the Shabbat, a kind word extended to a troubled fellow -- the higher realms, lacking physical bodies and a material reality, can only dream of such treasures.

The soul descends into the material world and discovers that everything that had been said about this place is true. Diamonds litter the streets. Wherever one turns, await countless opportunities to do mitzvot, good and G-dly deeds. One need only bend down to the ground and fill one's pockets.

Yet the value of these "diamonds" are not appreciated in this alien land. "Riches" of an entirely different sort beken, so that when the time comes to return, many a soul finds itself lugging home shiploads of fetid fish.

But no soul can traverse our world without picking up at least a few mitzvot along the way -- gems which enrich the heavens and make the entire trip more than worth its while...

Shabbat 1000 Breaks Record

By Liza Schwartz

Over one thousand students filled the University's East Gym on Friday, March 26 for the annual Shabbat 1000 program. Spearheaded by the Chabad House and co-sponsored with the Jewish Heritage Program and Hillel with a grant from the Elaine Heumann Memorial Foundation, the event broke all previous records, embracing participants with feelings of Jewish pride and community. Below is one student's personal perspective.

My friends and I tried to figure it out while waiting on line to wash our hands before saying *hamotzi*, but dividing 1000 by 14 million and then multiplying that answer by 100 was a little difficult without a calculator. Even without determining the exact percentage, though, we knew that 1000 of the world's 14 million Jews celebrating Shabbat together in one room was a significant event.

Known as Shabbat 1000, this annual Shabbat celebration at Binghamton University lived up to its name this year, attracting over 1000 Jewish students to the East Gym for a traditional Friday night

dinner complete with chicken, kugel, a little dancing, and lots of singing.

It exemplified a typical Binghamton Shabbat with Chabad's famous potato salad and Adirondack soda. Not only the food, but the people, too, gave the night that unique Binghamton flavor. I sat with my friends that I see regularly at Chabad and also ran into people who I haven't seen in a while or didn't even know were Jewish.

Sitting there surrounded by .007 percent of the world's Jewish population (later confirmed by a calculator) I started thinking about the other 99.993 percent. First, some of the Shabbat songs brought me back to summers at Camp Ramah and all the people and memories connected to those years. Then the discussion at my table turned to the current hot topic of housing sign-ups and I began to think about the future.

Next fall I'm staying in my current room, but in the spring I'm planning to study abroad in London. I can't wait to take a break from Binghamton and visit a city that's interesting enough to cancel out the depressing effects of its constant rain.

However, sitting at my table of ten in the East Gym I really acknowledged for the first time that other than the rain, not much else from Binghamton is coming with me to London.

In some ways that's a good thing. Living in a flat will be a lot better than the dorms and I hear that the Underground runs more frequently and punctually than BC Transit. Jewishly, London has a lot to offer as well. It has a thriving Jewish section and I'm sure I'll meet some members of the Jewish community there when I try to find Shabbat services or kosher for Passover tea and crumpets. But in an important moment of appreciating something while I have it, I realized during Shabbat 1000 how much I value Binghamton's Jewish community and how much I'll think of it during my semester abroad.

Part of the strength of the Jewish community here is its size, which was impossible to miss on Friday night as the East Gym filled to capacity with Jewish students. At the same time I have my circle of friends that personalizes my Jewish experience at Binghamton. That all these small groups of friends in the

Jewish community can come together for welcoming and unified events like Friday night's celebration and others is an admirable attribute of the Jewish population on this campus. Viewing that population as a part of a worldwide whole reinforced my appreciation of it so that it will stay with me as I explore another part of the world's Jewish population in London.

I'm sure I'm not the only person who came to this realization during Shabbat 1000. Everyone that attended has different plans for the present and future, but one thing shared by all the participants is a connection to Binghamton's Jewish community. One place that connection will travel is with me to London next year and wherever I will go after I graduate from Binghamton. I have friends who are going to Israel and Spain next year and others who are graduating, and I'm sure they will also feel this bond. Judging from Friday night's turnout, this connection will travel in at least 1000 other directions as well, reminding people of Binghamton's unique Jewish population and inspiring them to find that sense of community wherever they go.



Shabbat 1000 took hours of work on the part of many student committees. Here, the catering committee work feverishly in the final hours before the dinner.