

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

June 20, 2014 | Section 2

News, Events and More

NEWS

Nairobi Jewish Community Receives Support Visit from YCT Students



YCT recently sent two fourth-year students, Dr. Ben Elton (YCT '15) and Lieutenant Andrew Scheer (YCT '15), to Nairobi, Kenya, as part of a new initiative to invigorate small Jewish communities abroad. There, they supported the efforts of Rabbi Brachyahu Schonthal (YCT '13) who, alongside his wife Rebecca Schischa, serves as the spiritual leader of the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation. Below is an excerpt from Elton's blog.

Nairobi Diary, Day 7 – Sunday, June 15

If Sunday is a busy day for Rabbis in the US and UK, the same is true here. At 10:00 AM the Rabbi gave a bat mitzvah class to two sisters whose family has been here since 1925. Their parents were the third generation to be married in the synagogue. While the lesson was going on, Andrew and I got to know the youngest boy in the family, bonding over football (soccer). We had a great chat with

the father. While a charming English gentleman, he is very committed to living in Nairobi and to the community. He has a different vision of the future than some of the others we have heard from, coming from a younger, Anglo perspective, which was important for us to hear.

Our next meeting was at the home of Charles Szlapak, the elder statesman of the community, who arrived as a toddler and refugee. On the way, we were overtaken by the Presidential motorcade – the President of Kenya rides with his window down! Arriving at Mr. Szlapak's home, we saw that he was hosting Dr. Rev Ze'ev Amit, who was Minister here in the 1980s and visits once a year to supervise *kashrut* at a number of factories. They were able to reflect on successful initiatives during their time as the lay and religious leaders and gave advice for the future. We also saw wonderful sculptures by Charles' late wife and heard tales of *shechita* in Kenya from Rev Amit, the last qualified *shochet* to live here.

The highlight of the day, certainly, was a garden party to celebrate yesterday's bar mitzvah. The father told us that his father entered and left a gas chamber alive and declared that God was dead. The survivor grandfather did not want his son (our bar mitzvah's father) to have anything to do with religion. It was a big step for him to depart from those wishes and arrange a bar mitzvah for his own son, and to be called up to the Torah himself, though his knees were trembling. We brought along *tefillin* for the boy and his father. Rabbi Brachyahu put them on the boy. Andrew helped the father and then led *mincha*. *Aleinu* was followed by an emotional *kaddish* by the father in memory of his mother who died a year ago. We then danced with the bar mitzvah and the community.

Rabbi Brachyahu did an inspiring job of bringing religion and spirituality into a place where it would not have come

naturally. A party was transformed into a joyous expression of Jewish identity and faith. We hope the family will come back to the synagogue: Without a doubt, the rabbi gave them a hugely positive experience of Orthodox Judaism. That was a theme repeated by many of the secular Israelis who spoke to us, people who are not religious but feel a connection with the rabbi.

We finished the day visiting with a young couple. She is American-Israeli and he is Israeli from Cochin stock. A lovely pair of thoughtful, caring, engaged Jews. It gives one hope for the community here.

Rabbi Dov Lerea Named Dean of YCT



Rabbi Dov Lerea will assume the role of Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School in September. Rabbi Lerea joined YCT in 2013 as the Director of Educational Training and *Mashgiach Ruchani*. In his expanded role next year he will handle the administrative responsibilities of the academic program, including curricular, academic staffing and student matters.

We are thrilled that Rabbi Lerea, with his pedagogical expertise and vast experience, will be taking over the deanship of the yeshiva, and we are confident that this will ensure that the excellence of our curriculum and education continues to go from strength to strength. Rabbi Lerea will also continue to serve as *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the yeshiva.

As Rabbi Lerea assumes the deanship of the Yeshiva, Rabbi Linzer will be free to devote his full attention, as Rosh HaYeshiva, to his role as the spiritual core and

inspiration of Chovevei and to bringing Torah to the community.

Congregation Sherith Israel Dedicates New Torah

On Sunday, June 1, Rabbi Saul Strosberg (YCT '05) and Congregation Sherith Israel in Nashville, Tennessee, dedicated a new Torah. It has been more than 50 years since the century-old synagogue has procured a Torah, and the new scroll will take the place of one worn beyond repair. More than 200 people joined in the celebration marking this rare and special event. In his remarks at the dedication, Strosberg said of Torah, "It symbolizes our need and thirst for the knowledge of our tradition. The Torah is our moral compass; it is our guide. The Torah shows us how to live a life with God at its center and with the Jewish people as our immediate family."

To watch a short video from the dedication, click [here](#).



Mazal Tov to Gabe Kretzmer Seed (YCT '17)

Mazal Tov to YCT student Gabe Kretzmer Seed (YCT '17) on his marriage to Nina Kretzmer Seed! May the couple merit to build a *bayit ne'eman b'yisrael!*



Gabe and Nina Kretzmer Seed at the sheva brachot on Monday, June 16.

EVENTS

Yemei Iyun on Bible and Jewish Thought

When:

June 29-30

Where:

Manhattan Day School;
310 West 75th Street



Our annual Yemei Iyen on Tanakh and Jewish Thought will take place this Sunday, June 29 and Monday, June 30, at Manhattan Day School on the Upper West side.

For full information, including the complete class schedule, click [here](#). To complete your registration, please click [here](#).