

THE HEBRON FUND / THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF HEBRON

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Today

What is Chabad Doing in Hebron?

By Aliza Karp

THE PAST

In the 1820's the Chabad communities of Tzfat and Tiberias, relocated to Hebron at the behest of the second Chabad-Lubavitch Rebbe, Rabbi Dov Ber. The Chabad community grew and flourished until they were expelled by the Turks during World War I.

This past summer, Chabad Shiluchim, Rabbi Danny Cohen, his wife Batsheva, and their children, took up residence in the Avraham Avinu neighborhood to initiate a resurgence of Chabad activities in Hebron.

Danny grew up in Psagot near Jerusalem and Batsheva was raised in the Golan. Both are children of American families who made aliya. When they first married, they lived in Kiryat Arba. Recently, they spent three years in America doing Chabad Shlichus, including one year running a Chabad House in downtown Chicago. Their desire to return to Eretz Yisrael led them to be appointed by the Lubavitch movement in Eretz Yisrael as Shluchim residing in Hebron. "I feel humbled to be in position of rekindling the sparks of Chassidus in Hebron," admits Danny.

ATTRACTING VISITORS

Since the Cobens' arrival, busloads of Lubavitchers from various Chabad communities have visited Hebron to participate in Chassidishe Fabren-

Danny Cohen lighting Hanukkah menorah on Abu-Sneeh hills in Hebron



gens at Maarat HaMachpela, at the shul in Avraham Avinu established by Rabbi Dov Ber. Chabad visitors also go to the gravesite of Rebbitzin Menucha Rochel Slonim; Rabbi Dov Ber's legendary daughter and granddaughter of the Rabbi Shneur Zalman, first Rebbe of Chabad and author of the Tanya and Shulchan Orach HaRav.

Remembering the day when Rabbi Dov Ber was released from prison, the tenth of Kislev, a group of Lubavitchers from Rehovot came to Hebron to study the teachings of Chabad in the very shul that was funded by the same money that caused the arrest. Rabbi Dov Ber had been imprisoned in Russia on charges of treason for funding his community in Hebron, which was under Turkish rule. The money was considered to be going to Turk-

ish interests and the Turks were enemies of the Russians. The particular piece that was studied by the visitors from Rehovot in the shul on that day, explained why Rabbi Dovber specifically wanted the Jewish presence in Hebron to be strengthened.

EXPANSION

The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab, established the Yeshiva Toras Emes in Hebron in 1912 on the second of Cheshvan. The original Yeshiva building now houses the more than 200 students of the Shavei Hebron Yeshiva. This year, on the second of Cheshvan, Danny established a Kollel in the cemetery where Rebbitzin Menucha Rochel is buried. The Kollel is located beyond the area previously considered to be the outskirts of the Jewish community in Hebron, thereby expanding the borders of the community.

CONSOLATION

At the request of family members of fallen Col. Dror Weinberg, Hebron Brigade commander, volumes of the Sefer Tanya - the basic text of Chabad Chassidus - were printed at the spot of the deadly ambush on Shabbos VaYeitzei. The request came and was carried out within the week of Shiva. One hundred copies were printed.

CARING FOR THE SECURITY PERSONNEL

The main work of Chabad in Hebron remains with the soldiers and the security personnel. Danny and Batsheva take drinks and cakes - "physical refreshments" - to the many soldiers and policemen guarding Hebron. Danny offers the men Tefillin and words of Torah - "spiritual refreshments" - while Batsheva works with the female security personnel, offering them Lullavim and Esrogim on Sukkot, candles for Shabbos and words of Torah.

THE FUTURE

"Danny has a lot of work here in Hebron and I am confident he can do it," remarks Hebron community activist Baruch Marzel. "In Hebron we have hundreds of soldiers at one time. They stay for a few months and, as they rotate to do service elsewhere, more soldiers arrive. Danny himself served in a combat unit of the IDF for three years and reached the rank of Sergeant. I have personally seen just how well he communicates with the soldiers."