

# SEDERS FOR SOLDIERS: REPORT FROM CHEVRON

*By Aliza Karp*



As an introduction to the first Seder for the forty soldiers at the Tel Rumeida Army Base, Chabad Shliach Rabbi Danny Cohen told the famous story of simple man whose Seder was accepted 'on high' in favor of the Seder of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. It turned out that the simple man had consumed all his vodka before Pesach because he lived a downtrodden life and wanted to fulfill the Mitzvah of being happy on Yom Tov. When his wife managed to arouse him

from his drunken stupor at the time of the Seder, he was only able to declare his sincere regret for not being learned, his sincere love for Hashem and heartfelt gratitude for being released from bondage.

Cohen then told the soldiers at the Seder: "Tonight our Seder will be cut short. You will be called to guard duty in less than two hours. You are not allowed to drink wine before you go on duty. But that does not take away the dearness that your Seder will have in the heavens. This Seder is for soldiers who have mesiras nefesh to guard the children of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Your Seder will not have all the details of the Seder of the Berditchever, but it will rise to the heights and be special in the eyes of Hashem."

Hearing this, the soldiers gave a cheer and the Seder began on a high note, despite the fact that Kiddush had to be made on grape juice. Cohen's five year old son Menachem Mendel recited the Ma Nishtana with gusto, and the Seder was put on fast forward so that everyone would have a chance to wash and eat the Matza, Moror, Korach and Shulchan Orech.

During the meal the soldiers took turns reading from the Hagaddah. When they came to where it mentions Moshiach, they began singing the song made popular by Mordechai ben Dovid: Moshiach, Moshiach, Moshiach. At the end of the meal the soldiers got up to dance, gave a yasher koach to Cohen and his assistants and then prepared themselves for their next shift.

Cohen then went home to make a Seder for his family, but his two assistants, Dovid Okonov from Crown Heights and Menachem Sternberg from Kiyat Malachi stayed on to make a Seder for the soldiers who just finished their guard duty. The second Seder was complete with wine. The soldiers from both Seders thanked the Shluchim for coming and making the Chag so special. After the second Seder the bochurim finally came back to Cohen's apartment and made a Seder for themselves, finishing, not before Chatzos, but before 'zman Kriyas Shma shel Shachris,' sacrificing their personal Hiddur Mitzva for Zchus of the soldiers.

Yechil Amar of Betar and his wife of just a few months, decided they wanted to do something special for Pesach. Yechiel made a Seder for the soldiers stationed near Beit Romana, on land owned by Chabad since before 1929, and then walked an hour to Harsina, to make a Seder with his wife. His Seder was also very well received. And so was the handmade Shmura Matza that was given to each soldier in the area, largely sponsored by Amar.

In the weeks preceding Pesach, Cohen was busy arranging to provide leaders for the Sedorim at a dozen army bases in and around Hevron. He recruited Bochurim from Kiryat Malachi and Kfar Chabad. Reports are now in that all the Sedorim were full of Chayos, and the soldiers once again benefited from the warm embrace of the Rebbe of Lubavitch. As Cohen told the soldiers at his Seder. "You have all heard on the news that the Chabad Seder in Nepal will be the world's largest Seder. The largest Seder may be the only one that makes the news, but the Rebbe sends Shluchim to make Sedorim for every Jew, not forgetting the soldiers who, by remaining on base, provide security so that families in Eretz Yisroel can sit safely at their Seder tables."