

SHABBOS PROJECT 2016

INSPIRING OURSELVES TO INSPIRE OTHERS

By M Lowinger

Shabbos might just never be the same again for thousands of members of the Flatbush community who participated in this year's Shabbos Project. Not only did it provide an opportunity to invite less-affiliated guests to our community, but also to inspire ourselves and revitalize our own personal Shabbos experience.

Everybody loves Shabbos, but do we really appreciate it fully? Are we thrilled when Shabbos begins? Do we celebrate Shabbos with enthusiasm or do we find ourselves chasing the clock? And finally, do we want to share the beauty of what we experience with our fellow Jew?

There were plenty of guests, to be sure, who were less familiar with Shabbos, the services and the frum community. There was a genuine sense of camaraderie in the streets, in the shuls, and at every venue. The unspoken sentiment was: We are all one, despite our differences in lifestyle or background.

Anyone who Shabbos at Bais Binyomin powerful tefillos led by Says Moshe, full, there wasn't the house." Later that crowds returned Isaac Gross,

"The shul was so full, there wasn't an empty seat in the house"

attended Kabolas Agudas Yisroel savored the melodies of the Yehuda Green. "The shul was so an empty seat in

evening, the en masse. Mr. sponsor of the

Shabbos Project, made welcoming remarks, speaking of the great accomplishments of the Shabbos Project world-wide and the role Project Inspire has played in the community. Rabbi Yissocher Frand's dynamic presentation followed, encouraging all to share the beauty of Yiddishkeit with their fellow Jew, as well as suggesting that we inspire our own Shabbos table by sharing a hashgacha pratis experience of the week.

At a festive Oneg, Rabbi Yisroel Reisman cautioned us not to treat Shabbos as if it were recess. Rabbi Lieff urged us to anticipate Shabbos all week long. And Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro told us about the tremendous positive roshem that a Rosh Yeshiva had made on a black woman who worked in a hotel. She distinctly remembered him forty years later. Even our smallest actions can make a life-time difference. The stories varied, but the messages remained focused. Experience a meaningful Shabbos. Bring Hashem into our lives. And never be afraid to approach someone about Yiddishkeit.

In the morning, Rabbi Chaim Sampson, Founding Director of Project Inspire, spoke about "the five levels of pleasure," explaining what they are and how to differentiate between real and "counterfeit" pleasures. Early afternoon, Rabbi Orlofsky was introduced by Rabbi Steve Burg, CEO of Aish HaTorah, who graciously joined the community for Shabbos. Rabbi Orlofsky, with his usual dose of humor, explained how to answer difficult questions about Yiddishkeit.

Mrs. Tzippy Reifer - a Chassidishe housewife who wanted to help a friend's son who struggled with questions about Yiddishkeit - enthralled the ladies with her personal story. This pursuit led her to the Project Inspire Kiruv Training Seminar and today she is a polished speaker and a dynamic force for kiruv in her area. She represents a classic example of how one person can make a world of a difference.

Hundreds gather for shalosh seudos. We are introduced to David. David was searching for meaning in his life and might yet still be searching were it not for the kindness of a random Yeshiva bochur who helped him find lodging when he arrived all alone in Eretz Yisroel. Some time later, through Project Inspire, he was introduced to the warmth and hospitality of the Passaic community. Today he is engaged to a lovely young lady and together they will build a bayis ne'eman biyisroel. A little bit of chizuk can certainly go a very long way!

An inspiring musical havdalah led by Yehuda Green was followed by spirited music and dancing. Shabbos is long over, but nobody is in a hurry. Instead we are all thinking of the message we heard from Rabbi Lieff. "As soon as Shabbos is over, tell someone you can't wait for Shabbos to come again."

"It was a miraculous Shabbos," says Rabbi Chaim Sampson, "where people invited their less affiliated friends, as well as the entire frum community gaining personally from the speakers and baalei tefilah. When we get the inspiration we need for ourselves and share it with others, miracles happen!"

Photos: Havdalah Concert with Yehuda Green at Agudas Yisroel Bais Binyomin



SARAH LEAH'S STORY

I gained tremendously from the Shabbos program, but I think I gained even more from the reactions of my guests. We hosted three girls, Esti, Zahava, and Miriam, with two of their teachers. The girls came from unobservant families, and were amazed at everything in our home. "You're so lucky that you have this beautiful family," they told me. "You're so lucky to keep Shabbos every week in your beautiful home." And "Wow! You have a husband who learns Torah!" Seeing my life through their eyes was amazing. It made me appreciate everything I have so much more!

TIFFANY'S STORY

Tiffany came to Flatbush from South Jersey, informing her hosts that she had just recently discovered she was Jewish and that this would be her first Shabbos experience. It was all very new and exciting to her. "We explained," says Izzy, "that on Shabbos we truly experience peace and quiet. She loved it. Sometime during Shabbos she told us, 'This is good for my soul.'" When Shabbos ended, Tiffany started making her way home. About an hour later, she sent a text message to her host family. "I'm so sad," she wrote, "to go back to my reality."

AISH ALUMNI & JINSPIRE JOIN THE SHABBOS PROJECT

A special event is always more meaningful when shared with others. Project Inspire, as a program of Aish Hatorah, reached out to Aish Alumni to join the Flatbush community for Shabbos. The Aish Alumni, many of whom are still on their journey to Torah observance, responded with enthusiasm. The group was hosted on Friday evening by Mr. and Mrs. Isaac and Edie Gross at Agudas Yisroel Bais Binyomin.

"You are my heroes," Mr. Gross told them. "You have all come so far in your lives and have given up so much. You inspire us to really dig deep and become better people."

Also joining was a group of men and women who recently attended Jinspire trips to Israel. They were joined by their observant City Leaders and mentors. Says one Leader who participated in the event, "The sense of achdus and warmth was palpable. We had a wonderful time!"

