

PLP TRIPS 2017



JACK LANZER
UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION

The Kollel Beth HaTalmud Yehuda Fishman Institute, as part of its PLP University Students Leadership / Jack Lanzer Program, recently ran two overseas trips for students seeking to learn more about their Jewish heritage.

The tours to the USA and to Israel were co-sponsored by the Wolfson Foundation, and we are pleased to report that they were amazingly successful.

The trips were just the beginning of a year-long Program that the Kollel has developed to promote and encourage less-affiliated Jewish university students to discover more about Judaism, and ultimately, to become leaders of their Jewish communities.

On their return from the trips, the students are treated to weekly speeches, workshops, weekend retreats, and social events which gives them exposure to a whole host of thought-provoking concepts and understandings in classic Jewish thought, outlook, and law.

This week we report on the USA trip [Israel trip report next week IY”H]

USA TRIP TO LOS ANGELES, CA, AND NEW YORK, NY

Goal: To show the students how interesting and relevant Torah learning is. Also to show them many examples of frum businessmen who are both successful in business and manage to maintain their religious involvement (shabbos, learning, davening).

Led by: Rabbi Myron Sacher

LOS ANGELES



Ten students from around Australia signed up to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime Kiruv adventure trip.

The group assembled in Melbourne airport, and flew together to LA.



"We hired a van, and each day we drove to Pico Blvd to the Adass Torah shul where we met Rabbi Yonasan Quinn who gave classes that were both entertaining and inspiring. He gave over important ideas in a humorous and non-threatening way and students absolutely loved what they learnt and his personality.

After the class, the group sat down to learn Gemora with Rabbi Myron."

Dinner was eaten nightly at various hosts, such as...

...in the home of Mr Allen Hershberg (a prominent businessman at financial services giant Morgan Stanley). The boys were treated to pizzas and an enthralling two and half hour discussion.

...Mr Shai Stern (Shai is a very prominent businessman who owns many different businesses one of which sells money-processing technology to banks. Some of Americas biggest banks are clients of his). He served sushi and had the students spellbound for an hour with a passionate talk on being a religious Jew and being successful in the workplace.





A talk from Mr Jim Kapenstein

Other highlights included:

- Attending the Jewish Learning Exchange to hear a riveting talk from Mr Jim Kapenstein, the Executive Vice Chairman of the Walt Disney Company. He enthralled the students for over an hour with stories, life insights and general inspiration.
- Dr Jacob Fleischman (who is a Mechutan of the Rosh Kollel, Rabbi B Wurzburger) is a researcher and lecturer in the field of Infectious Diseases in UCLA.

The students were impressed by his modesty and simplicity despite his breathtaking knowledge and accomplishments in the field of medical research. He shared details on a number of studies both past and current. When asked whether he ever considered working as a medical doctor in private practice [which is far more lucrative], he replied with something so incredible, the students couldn't believe it - he said that he never felt comfortable making money off other people's misery therefore he chose to spend his life in academia.



In Dr Fleischman's home

Friday night dinner was eaten in the home of Rabbi Quinn in the Pico-Robertson area who not only served up a sumptuous meal but also entertaining and thought-provoking discussion.



Daily Shiur from Rabbi Y Quinn

The students were hosted by various young families both for sleeping and Shabbos lunch, where they experienced the beauty of Shabbos with religious families.

A magnificent melava malka hosted by Rabbi Akiva Westreich who spoke to the students about his experiences both learning in Yeshiva and studying in Harvard Law School, as well as his job in a very prominent LA law firm.

The students also had the opportunity to do some exciting touring of the LA area, such as Rodeo Drive (one student was lucky enough to get to drive a Ferrari), Mt Hollywood hiking trail and other famous sights.



"After six days in LA, we made our way to New York, and drove from the airport to Monsey, where we received a warm welcome and a warm meal from Rabbi Klatzko. Rabbi Klatzko is the head of Campus Kiruv for the Olami/Wolfson foundation, and kindly hosted the group in his home for the whole week."



NEW YORK

Every morning the students woke to a good breakfast, and would have an enjoyable shiur from Rabbi

Klatzko on topics such as Shabbos and the role of the Jews in the world.

A number of students commented after the shiur that their perception of Shabbos has completely changed.

Rav Myron drove the group around in a van and in an informal way educated them in Yiddishkeit.

The group met at the Helmsley Building to hear from Jack Alvo, a survivor of the 9/11 attacks. Jack was in the South Tower when the second plane hit the Building,



With 9/11 survivor Jack Alvo

Highlights



**With CEO of Eastern Union
Ira Zlotowitz**

beer!) with Mr Ira Zlotowitz (CEO of Eastern Union).

Mr Zlotowitz gave an incredible talk on his experiences and theories in the business world, describing how he built up a multi-billion dollar corporation. He also spoke lovingly about his father - Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz-General Editor at Artscroll. He also spoke about the importance of giving charity. He said that this is the one area that one is allowed to test Hashem. When you give, it will come back to you, in one way or another.

He likes to give charity in such a way that it affects the person's life significantly. In other words, instead of writing a cheque for \$500 he will rather take on to pay the persons electricity bill from now on. This is life-changing for a person who is struggling to survive financially. Then he will turn to Hashem and say, "in the same way that I have changed his life, please change mine!" Because for Hashem money is irrelevant. He will act measure for measure.

The next day, the group travelled to Queens for a very special opportunity to meet one of the best-known speakers on the Jewish circuit - Rabbi Paysach Krohn. The boys spent an uplifting hour in his home hearing stories, sharing ideas and enjoying each other's company.



Meeting Rabbi Paysach Krohn at this Queens home



Hearing Carey Wolchok's life story

There was some small problem though...

While the deal was technically legal, it involved what he called an "improper business practice", and after consulting his Rov...he walked away from the deal.

Many such stories end with "but the deal fell through in the end, and the person who did the deal lost money on it..." this story doesn't end that way.

Someone else stepped in and made the profit.

What was most astonishing was Mr Wolchok's next statement; he reflected that "I am so happy that I didn't do the deal" The students were astounded.

and he managed to make it to safety. He spoke very openly and emotionally about his experience and how it has impacted his life over the last 15 years.

That evening the group met near Times Square to hear a talk and eat a catered dinner (with free

"I am deeply humbled and grateful to have been given the opportunity to be a part of this program. I sit here writing this reflection, trying desperately to conjure the words that will most accurately convey my thoughts and give them clarity. You see there is so much to say, so much I experienced, the people I met, the speakers I had the privilege of listening to, the high calibre of individuals in our group; I find this task very difficult indeed. And yet the same idea has been pervading my mind ever since I came home, a simple, often overlooked idea - **that I am lucky to be a Jew**. How is it possible that this trip even happened? How is it possible that businessmen worth billions of dollars gave up their valuable time and energy to meet me? How is it that I was hosted by people who without thought or hesitation treated me as a member of the family? The resounding answer is **that I am indeed part of the family**. We are one family. And this was confirmed to me one hundred fold during my two weeks in America. From a simple idea, a wonderful program of learning and self-exploration has come into fruition. And my Jewish identity is now stronger than ever. Thank you to all who made this happen. Thank you."

[From one of the participants]

That night, the group heard an interesting talk from Mr Carey Wolchok, the founder and chairman of Perilune Group - a private investment firm.

Mr Wolchok spoke about how Jewish history proves Hashem's involvement in our lives, and the fact that often, it's only with hindsight that one is able to discern Hashem's guiding Hand.

He related a fascinating episode describing how - when his company was involved in financing huge deals involving commercial aircraft, he was approached with a venture involving the purchase and sale of three passenger airliners.

He would have walked away with \$40 million in profit.



At the OU Headquarters

"I think that the program did a great job of presenting Judaism in an open and engaging manner. There was a strong sense of "if things don't make sense to you this way there may be other ways that they do"

I think that this contrasts with the Jewish day school approach which does not allow for this kind of approach. Also this is the background that most of the participants came from meaning that it was new and important information. Within myself I felt that I now see Judaism and religious observance, not as a thing I should do for external reasons but rather as something that can enrich my life. This I believe was a result of hearing all of the speakers who presented Judaism as such. All of them are such inspirational and successful people that seeing their approach to life inspired me to take a similar approach and outlook.

This has to happen more. There is so much to gain for so many people."

[From one of the participants]

in the Monsey community who fell into a coma during childbirth.
Shabbos was ushered out with a beautiful musical havdalah.



The following day, the students visited the headquarters of the OU (Orthodox Union) which is located near Wall St.

The group was met by Rabbi Grossman (Rabbi B Wurzburger's brother-in-law) who discussed what the various functions of the OU are. After that, Rabbi Tendler gave a session on the basics of what makes things Kosher. The students were enlightened and impressed when hearing just how complex and sophisticated the field of Kashrus is.

Following that the group made its way into Manhattan to Washington Heights where they were met by Rabbi Mordechai Becher who warmly welcomed his fellow Australians and took the group to a restaurant for some Chinese food.

Shabbos was spent in the home of Rabbi Klatzko, and proved to be one of the highlight of the program. The Rabbi hosts up to a hundred guests (!) each Shabbos (when Myron woke up on Shabbos morning, there wasn't a couch that didn't have a slumbering form on it). Rabbi Klatzko kindly limited the number of guests that week to bestow special attention on the Australian group, and restricted the guest list to just fifty...

At the meals, Divrei Torah was shared, and most people had the opportunity of introducing themselves to the crowd.

At the third meal, the Rabbi introduced the group to his famous 'l'chaim and commitment experience' where he gives out a l'chaim from a 40 year-old wine to whoever stands up and commits to take on a Mitzva to further their Torah growth. In our group, two boys took on to keep Shabbos. One took on to start wearing a kippa. Another two committed to learn with a chavrusa once a week. Four students took on to start wearing tzitzis as a merit for a lady



Listening to a talk by Rabbi Mordechai Becher



Hearing a talk from Rabbi Benzion Klatzko

The last day of the program was a day of packing and cleaning. Lunch was eaten sitting around the table at the Klatzko's hearing an inspirational story from the Rabbi and final parting words. With that the group packed the van and headed off bringing to a close an exceptionally successful program.

**ISRAEL TRIP - WRITE UP
NEXT WEEK IY"H**