

IllumiNations

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The Whole World is Made of Small Shtetlach! —The Rebbe

In a Southern Colorado City, a Jew gets Shmurah Matzah. Down in a resort town, a Tanya is being printed. In the aisles of Trader Joe's, someone connects to his Yiddishkeit. Welcome to the life of Rabbi Liberow, the Shliach to Colorado Springs.

Colorado attracts many tourists because of its natural beauty and sprawling mountains. One key attraction is the Telluride Ski Resort, which is a six-hour drive from us. It attracts many Yidden from the East Coast, especially during the summer months.

Over the past 19 years, we've driven there numerous times to connect with as many vacationing Yidden as we can find. When we meet, the external beauty of Colorado fades into the background and they discover the neshama within themselves. We speak about Yiddishkeit and encour-

age them to do a mitzvah. They come on vacation to recharge their bodies, but when they meet us, they also recharge their souls.

Last summer, we traveled to the Telluride Ski Resort to print a Tanya. That way, instead of just bringing Yiddishkeit into the area, the area itself would generate and be a source of Yiddishkeit!

Of course, we ran out of toner. We were printing about 12,000 double-sided

sheets, and I didn't realize how much we would need! While we waited for it to be overnighted, I decided to use my time to find Yidden. I took my tefillin and went on the gondola, a cable car system that connects Telluride to the nearby Mountain Village.

I got off at the wrong stop and had to wait for the next gondola to pick me up again. When it came, I hopped back on. I started chatting with the man sitting inside, and it turned out that he was a Jew from Arizona. He was very excited to meet me and agreed to put on tefillin.

We got our toner and got back to work.

Later, someone walked in and said he was Jewish. "I was in the art gallery upstairs," he told us, "and a worker told me that a Rabbi was downstairs, printing a book!"

I explained what we were doing and helped him put on tefillin.

Each time we come to Telluride, we meet Yidden from all over. It's incredible to see that although they didn't grow up frum, they identify as Yidden and are proud of who they are. They are ready and willing to tap into their Judaism; we just need to be there to help them connect.

We regularly have military members attend Chabad events. Colorado Springs is home to the Air Force Academy, Fort Carson, and two air force bases. We have arranged and hosted brissin for military families who were stationed here.

A few years ago, I switched seats on my flight and was talking with the guy sitting next to me. He told me that he was a Jewish professor, teaching on one of the air force bases in town. What hashgacha pratis! We spoke for a bit and decided to make a Chanukah party for the Jewish personnel on his base.



After a lot of planning, we arranged a beautiful party. It was in such a high security area, we couldn't even take any pictures! The Yidden on that air force base were able to celebrate Chanukah, all because I switched seats and spoke with the person sitting next to me.

Since our area is very spread out, a big focus of our shlichus is visiting people in their homes. Sometimes we go just to chat, while other times we go to deliver things like honey cakes, Menorahs, Mishloach Manos, and Matzos before the Yamim Tovim. Usually, we fly down some bachurim to help us reach as many homes as possible.

One of our biggest projects is giving out Shmurah Matzah. A few years ago, we delivered Shmurah Matzah to more than 160 homes!. It was a massive project and took lots of time, because many Jewish people live miles apart from each other.

This past week, I visited a Jew in Trinidad, near the New Mexico Border. It was a 270 mile round-trip, just to deliver Shmurah Matzah!

These visits might take a lot of time and effort, but they mean a lot to the Yidden here. It's very powerful when they get a knock on the door with a reminder of something Jewish.

We do a lot of driving here in Colorado. Each day, we drive over four hours... just to bring our kids to school in Denver! It's about 60 miles away, which means that we drive 240 miles each day to bring our kids to and from school! After doing this

drive for 18 years, it doesn't faze us anymore. Chinuch is very important, so we're more than happy to do it.

Another big part of our shlichus is connecting with Yidden we meet on the street. Hashem clearly directs our steps; too many times, we were in just the right place at just the right time.

During a late night Costco run a decade ago, a Jewish man came over and introduced himself; today, he is a regular at Chabad.

A few months ago, on my way out of the Chabad House, a mailman poked his head out of his van to tell me that he celebrated Chanukah. That week, he came to Shul and put on tefillin for the first time.

In Trader Joe's, a Jew came over to talk to us. He lives in the mountains and only comes to town twice a month to shop. Because of that encounter, he drove in to join our recent Hachnasas Sefer Torah.

Another Jew who lives in the mountains came across Rabbi Manis Friedman's classes and was inspired to connect to us, his local shluchim. We visited him on his ranch and helped him put on tefillin. Even though he lives more than 60 miles away, he loves to drive the three-hour round trip for the Tanya class.

Last year, just a few days before Sukkos, I met a Jew at the local supermarket. I took down his information and went to his home on Sukkos to help him shake lulav and esrog. Hashem made sure that we would meet at just the right time so he would get to do this mitzvah.

Another time, I decided to go pick up my car from the mechanic a bit earlier than when it was supposed to be ready. I arrived just at the right time to meet a Jewish fellow there, who became very involved with Chabad. He lived about a mile from the Shul.

I can tell you so many more stories just like these. They may seem small, but each one is huge.

Each of these interactions inspires us. Hashem arranges that we "bump into" Yidden who are so eager to learn more and connect. Even just talking about Yiddishkeit and reminding them about their faith is a big deal. If they take the next step and do a mitzvah, Hashem gets so much nachas! But it's not instant change, and we focus on one thing at a time.

Each day of our shlichus, we feel Hashem's presence in our lives. The clear hashgacha pratis we see everywhere we go gives us the chizuk we need to continue our work in such a faraway place. Just by being who we are and welcoming the opportunities that Hashem sends our way, we can make a difference, one Jew at a time.

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