

Beyond the Headlines

KEEP DIGGING

Fourteen-year-old Nathan Schlanger is the son of Rabbi Eli Schlanger of blessed memory. Rabbi Eli was a devoted and active Chabad shaliach, who was murdered almost a year ago in the terror attack at Bondi Beach in Australia, while lighting Chanukah candles for the Jewish community.

In an address to participants at the International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries in New York last week, Nathan said the following:

"When my father met someone for the first time, he would greet them as if they were an old friend. But a few minutes later, when he said goodbye, they really *were* old friends. That's who he was.

"I remember him taking me with him to hand out matzah before Pesach, door to door. I was 10. I saw that some homes didn't have a mezuzah, and I decided to change that. I raised money, and then together with my father, we put up 120 new mezuzahs on the doors of Jewish homes. I remember that at the end of that campaign, he said that I wasn't just the son of a *shaliach*, I was a *shaliach* myself. At the time, I didn't really understand what he meant. Now, I think I understand.



"This week's Torah portion tells about the wells in the Land of Israel. After Avraham passed away, the Pelishtim blocked up the wells he had dug. So, Yitzchak dug them again, and the Torah tells us something fascinating: Yitzchak gave the wells the same names that Avraham had given them. Why does that matter? Yitzchak could have given them new names. But no, he wanted to continue what his father had started. He kept the same names. I think there's a message here for all of us. Each of us has a unique mission, but we are continuing the work of the generations before us. That's what my father taught me.

"Chassidus teaches us something important about digging wells. When you dig a well, the water is already there. You don't create the water. You just have to dig until you reach it. It's waiting. And that's what a Chabad shaliach does. The water is life; it is our soul. Every person we meet has a soul inside them. Sometimes it's easy to see, and sometimes you have to dig deeper, but the soul is always there. Our job is to help bring it out.

"That's what my father and I did when we

handed out matzah and put up mezuzahs. That's what you, the *shluchim*, do all over the world, every day. And that's what you'll do when you light giant menorahs this Chanukah in front of hundreds of thousands of people. You'll help the soul inside come out.

"My father dedicated his life to digging wells, and sometimes, just like in the Torah portion, there are enemies who try to fill up those wells. Last Chanukah, on Bondi beach in Australia, they tried to stop Abba's *shlichus*. I remember what my father always told me: 'When they attack us, be more Jewish, act more Jewish, and appear more Jewish.' They couldn't stop his *shlichus*, and they can't stop my *shlichus* because those wells are still there, and there are still so many more Jews waiting for someone to come and help them. That's what Yitzchak did after Avraham passed away. He didn't give up. He went and dug the wells again. And that's what I want to do too. That's what I take from the Torah portion, and that's what I take from my father. Avraham dug, Yitzchak dug again, and we will keep digging, until the complete Redemption. Tatty, I will keep digging, in your name."

And then 7,000 people in the hall in New York rose to their feet and applauded him.

May we all keep digging wells until we reach the sweet water.

THE UPSIDE OF A CLOGGED AIR CONDITIONER

When Moshe Katzav, a Jerusalem air-conditioning technician, came to fix our clogged air conditioner, he had an unexpected explanation for the problem.

"It's a sign that we're building up the Land of Israel," he declared with a broad smile.



"More and more people are calling me because their air conditioners aren't cooling properly. And I tell them it's because they're sucking in all the dust from Jerusalem's construction sites. Isn't it amazing? Everywhere you look, they're building new neighborhoods, apartment buildings, and a light rail system. Even the air conditioners can feel it!"

Katzav says colleagues in other Israeli cities are reporting similar problems, all thanks to the construction boom.

Of course, dust, noise, and clogged air conditioners are hardly pleasant. But as Katzav reminded me, they're also signs of a country that's growing and developing.

Sometimes, even an air conditioner in need of repair can give us reason to celebrate. ■