

Hachnasas Orchim in Warsaw

HAMODIA STAFF

“Eilu devarim she'ein lahem shiur ... hachnasas orchim...”

What brings a Rav from a community in Beit Shemesh and the great-grandson of the *Eim Habbanim Smeichah*, a Sephardic *mohel* who lives in New York, and a Modern Orthodox couple with three little children, to spend *Shabbos Bereishis* together in Warsaw, Poland?

The answer: a malfunctioning generator on a plane ...

Some three hours before Shabbos, on 28 Tishrei/October 11, Rabbi Mordechai Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, received an urgent message from his friend, Rabbi Edgar Gluck, the Rav of Galicia, that there were 20 Shabbos-observant Jews who had been unexpectedly stuck in the city for Shabbos. The Rav arranged sleeping accommodations for them in the Radisson Blue Hotel near the Nozick Shul, the central shul in Warsaw. Then he connected them with the Kosher Delight caterer in the city, which quickly expanded the *kehilah's* Shabbos table to be able to host the additional guests.

The passengers were on a flight from Israel to the United

States with a stopover in Kiev. “A short time after we took off from Kiev,” they related, “we saw that the plane was turning back in the direction from which it came. We realized that something was wrong.” A problem had arisen in one of the plane’s generators, and an announcement was made that the plane would land in Warsaw for a short time to deal with the problem. But for the Shabbos-observant passengers, every hour was precious and they could not wait for the flight to take off again.

They contacted Rabbi Schudrich, and the “Shabbos marathon” began.

“They didn’t want to let us leave the airport because we were booked on the flight,” they continued, “so we left our tickets with one of the clerks, and explained that we would have to remain in Warsaw until sundown the next day, and that they should find us alternate flights for Motzoei Shabbos or Sunday.”

Because of the delay in getting out of the airport, the guests reached the hotel at candle-lighting time. A community representative waited for them and, after they had gotten themselves organized and lit candles, escorted them

to the Nozick Shul. There, they joined the *davening* with the local community and with Jewish tourists from around the world, as well as more than 250 Israeli youths. The guests then ate their meals with the community — albeit with their weekday flying clothes (as the suitcases had remained on the plane, of course), but the atmosphere was elevated and joyous.

The next day, after *Shacharis*, they celebrated the birthdays of two of the local community members with a festive *Kiddush* and then joined the Shabbos morning meal. That was followed by a tour of the historic city with the local Jews. Shabbos concluded with *Minchah* and *seudah shelishis*, all courtesy of Kosher Delight.

The guests were very positive: “There’s a reason we are here for Shabbos. Hashem arranged for us to spend Shabbos here with you and we’re happy about it!” With true *Yiddishe emunah* of accepting everything happily, and by performing *hachnasas orchim* with joy, we all — guests and hosts alike — enjoyed a truly uplifting and joyous Shabbos!

Reprinted from *Hamodia*, Monday, October 12, 2015.

NYC Schools Chancellor Fariña Visits Model School and Center for Autism

KELLIE HOCKLESS

Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices, School and Center for Children with Autism welcomed New York Department of Education Chancellor Carmen Fariña on Thursday, October 8, 2015.

Guided by founder and CEO Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Educational Director Gili Rechany and Program Director Suri Gruen, Chancellor Fariña toured the Brooklyn-based model school which features a Snoezelen room and a Daily Living Skills Center. Speaking with the administrators, Fariña acknowledged the importance of integrating children with autism in regular classroom settings.

“Maximizing independence for students with autism and improving the quality of life is the key focus for integrated quality education,” Fariña says. Walking through the halls and classrooms of the model

school, the significant amount of space and the staff to student ratio was not lost on the 50-year veteran in education. She was able to see firsthand how Shema Kolainu differs from other local Early Intervention agencies and schools and why educators come from around the world to receive specialized training.

“Currently we serve children ages 11 and younger — providing treatment, education, professional training and mentoring, as well as tools that will serve them in adulthood,” said Dr. Weinstein. “Socialization is extremely important and a main focus here at Shema Kolainu,” added Rechany.

Chancellor Fariña applauded the Snoezelen room which is specially designed to deliver stimuli to various senses, using lighting effects, color, sounds, music and scents. The school also hosts the Daily Living Skills Center which helps students master basic living

skills and everyday activities by mimicking events in a controlled setting. Through these unique rooms and programming, Shema Kolainu strives to help students reach their full potential for independence, productivity and inclusion in the community.

“It is amazing to see the work that continues to be done here at Shema Kolainu even before the rest of the city was doing it,” Fariña says of the school founded in 1998.

“It was a pleasure to meet with Chancellor Fariña and showcase the special work we are doing here at Shema Kolainu - Hear Our Voices. We always welcome the opportunity to discuss improving programming for children with autism and developmental disabilities,” Dr. Weinstein remarked on Chancellor’s visit.

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