



Today, Lativ has many talmidim capable of learning Gemoro and Mishnah Berurah on their own, and many continue their studies in prominent yeshivos and midrashos in Israel or elsewhere. Lativ has now evening learning sessions as well as a morning kolel program for advanced learners. Besides that, there are two Shabbatonim, each four days long, in a first-class hotel outside town every year, featuring prominent rabbis and educators from all over the world. Similarly, the chagim are all celebrated together.

Rosh Hashonoh was imminent. The sun was setting now over the hills of Buda, giving way to dusk and with it, the first day of the year. Everything was ready at Lativ: the tables were all set with the nicest cutlery and bouquets of flowers promising a pleasant time. Soon they all would be laden with simanim and delicacies. Women lit candles and men were beginning to arrive from the Lativ minyan. The convivial atmosphere of Yom Tov was palpable. This year, eighty participated in the seudos: young people in their twenties and thirties, some older with children already. Among them were serious talmidim and beginners who

had just started to come back to Judaism. The beis midrash, where the seudos were located, soon filled with warm welcomes, good wishes for the New Year and lively chatter. And of course, we did not miss messages of divrei Torah; there was so much to share and learn about the seriousness of the day.

A few days later, business starts again in the local Orthodox school's courtyard. This is the place Lativ uses to erect its huge sukkah. This community sukkah—probably one of the biggest in Budapest—is large enough to seat a hundred individuals. On the first night of Sukkos, the sukkah is filled to capacity, with people joining for tefila and the seudah. One sees people from all walks of life coming to participate in the seudah, relish in the grandeur of the tastefully decorated Lativ sukkah and enjoy each other's company. Yet, the simcha of the first day, with the good company of friends in the sukkah, the delectable cuisine, the words of Torah and the spiritual majesty was yet to come. Two days later, the Lativ simchas beis hashoevah was something worth seeing for everyone. What were the ingredients for a successful and greatly spiritual

night? A great Jewish band to provide the music, a hundred individuals eager to sing and dance together, food in incredible proportions and convivial company to spend time of kedusha. One could see a miniature Yerusholayim as the dance intensified and the singing reached to Shomayim.

There is much reason to rejoice. It is hard to imagine where these people would be without Lativ. While having many talmidim and members at his organization is a source of simcha for Rav Keleti, he realizes that the work has just begun. Budapest still has the largest Jewish population in Europe—90,000 is the most quoted number. But, sadly, most of them do not even know they are Jewish, let alone anything about their heritage. When I asked him what should be the next move in order to reverse this situation, he answered firmly: 'everyone responsible should realize that we are in the 24th hour. For long I have had the premonition that if we do not do something radical, we will witness the dissolution of the final remnants of the Hungarian Jewish population in Budapest. We are talking about the current generation of young Jews who can be saved. This

is the last generation about which we can make that claim. Wait one more generation and all hope will be lost. It is not that if we are not supported, then we have to face a financial cut for the coming year. If we are not supported, we are running the risk of losing this generation for good. It is the responsibility of all of us around the world to step up to the challenge of saving a dwindling community. It is either now or never.'

The sobering prognostications of Rav Keleti offset the cheering noise of the dancing and laughter coming from the sukkah. It was time to rejoice! The band started playing another joyous melody: *Tzavei yeshuos Yaakov*, reverberating from the speaker as the long line of dancers happily sang along as they energetically dance energetically stamped their feet on the ground. *Tzavei Yeshuos Yaakov* is more than just a song; the words carry real meaning to us, members of Lativ. All of us present felt that we were part of a real *yeshua*, a saving hand. In Budapest, Lativ is this hand in action!

The author is a member of the local kolel



The "Shoes on the Danube Bank" memorial in Budapest. The memorial was created by film director Can Togay, together with sculptor Gyula Pauer to honour the Jews who were killed by fascist Arrow Cross militiamen in Budapest during World War II.

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