Where every Jew is family and Judaism with a smile — these are motifs of the Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong in Shanghai. It welcomes all Jews and holds religious observances, celebrations and social activities. Nie Xin reports.

The Chabad Pudong, which opened in 2005, is led by Rabbi Avraham Greenberg and his wife Nechamie Greenberg. Around 120 families are regular members.

"The center provides a Jewish home away from home, for all Jews in Pudong (and elsewhere)." says Rabbi Greenberg. He says the Chabad mottoes are: A home away from home, for all Jews regardless of background or level of observance; Here every Jew is family.

Greenberg was born in Israel and pursued rabbinical studies in the United States. He moved to Shanghai around six years ago, seeking an opportunity to contribute to the global Jewish community.

There are now two Jewish centers in Shanghai. The other, and the first, was founded in the Hongqiao area in 1998 by Greenberg’s brother, Rabbi Shalom Greenberg. It has around 500 families as regular members. Both brothers are from Israel.

"With more and more expatriates moving or settling in Pudong, we found it necessary to found another center here," says Rabbi Avraham Greenberg.

The Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong welcomes all Jews, whether they are from reform, conservative, or orthodox backgrounds, and regardless of nationality. Most members are from Israel, the United States, Europe, South America and South Africa.

In addition, several hundred businesses, students, artists and others from around the world take part in the center’s activities throughout the year.

Non-Jewish family members, such as Leibowitz’s wife, are welcome. The community only accepts members who are foreign passport holders.

Both centers organize festivities and observances for all Jewish holidays, including Hanukkah, Passover and Rosh Hoshana.

They offer clubs and programs such as the Women’s Circle, Power Breakfast, Lunch and Learn, Men’s Night Out and Teen Club for teenage girls, among others.

The Jewish community has deep bonds with Shanghai, dating back to the 19th century. It offered shelter to Jewish refugees escaping persecution during World War II. Unlike almost every other country, it waived visa requirements. Jewish businessmen also helped build the city and some of its most important buildings.

Shanghai’s Jewish community at its peak numbered more than 30,000.

"Many thousands of Jews were saved thanks to the kindness of the Chinese people," says Leibowitz. "Jews feel they share a lot in common with the Chinese people, and admire the culture and long history of China."

He says both Jews and Chinese have a language that has been in use for thousands of years, both cultures place a very high value on education and each is rooted in family values.

As the Jewish community has grown and flourished in Shanghai, the Chinese government and people have been welcoming and supportive.

The Jewish community has contributed to the city through business and trade, providing job opportunities, purchasing goods and services and volunteering to various activities that benefit Chinese society in general.

"To hold parties, the most difficult thing is to prepare typical Jewish foods," says Rabbi Avraham Greenberg. "Many thousands of Jews were saved thanks to the kindness of the Chinese people." says Leibowitz. "Jews feel they share a lot in common with the Chinese people, and admire the culture and long history of China."

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