



► Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong educates Jewish children in Shanghai

LINKING THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

(From far left)
Each kid receives a golden chocolate medal at the awards ceremony. Nechamie Greenberg (right) gives a medal to a boy.

Earlier in June, students of Pudong-Shanghai Hebrew School tugged at their parents and teachers' heartstrings with a moving performance linking the past and the present of the Jewish community in Shanghai. The children were celebrating the end of the academic year with speeches and video projects presenting the chronology of Jewish migration to the city.

Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong has been running a Hebrew school for more than 10 years. Established by Rabbi Avraham Greenberg and his wife Nechamie Greenberg, it is devoted to educating Jewish children with the basics of Jewish culture and traditions as well as the language.

Every Sunday, kids from ages 3 to 13 come to the school to spend two hours with Jewish teachers and friends. "It is not just about Hebrew, it is about being part of the community, being with friends. Here it makes them connected," noted Michael Agam, whose son and two daughters attend the school every weekend.

Celebrating the end of the academic year was another chance for Jewish children to express their patriotic feelings and recall the history of their nation. Young Jewish children dressed up in ethnic clothes and singing Israeli folk songs such as "Hava Nagila" while the older kids gave meaningful speeches about the history of the Jewish people in Shanghai.



A kid gives a speech about the history of the Jewish people in Shanghai.

In addition, 11-year-old Ella Perez gave an acceptance speech about the role of Hebrew schools in her life. "When sometimes we do not have classes on Sunday, I am wondering all morning what could be more interesting than Hebrew school," she said.

Selfless dedication

The performances were followed by an awards ceremony. Each child was given a golden chocolate medal and a gift. Their rabbi pointed out that the majority of Hebrew school students are under the age of 12 who are truly determined to become familiar with the Jewish culture.

Nechamie Greenberg also awarded

the tutors for their dedication. "It is challenging for kids to focus. Sometimes we encourage them with a token system," said 16-year-old tutor Yehonatan Rahamim.

"In Judaism, by the age of 13, boys are considered adults. By this age they already know the language and traditions, so they can actually join the teachers and help them teach the next generation," the rabbi said about the young age of the tutors. "Many of our students graduated and decided to become a part of the institution in a giving way."

Rabbi is my job

The Jewish community is represented in Shanghai by a variety of institutions. Among nine synagogues in Chinese mainland, three Jewish centers are located in Shanghai: the Shanghai Jewish Center, established in 1998; Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong, established in 2006; and Intown Jewish Center, established in 2010.

These centers provide a wide array of services and educational programming for the Jewish community in Shanghai and its visitors. There are also synagogues, kindergartens, social events, a Mikvah and other venues promoting Jewish culture.

Rabbi Avraham Greenberg established the Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong in 2006 after being inspired by the Lubavitcher Rebbe – Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson whom have contributed to fostering Jewish pride worldwide.

In Judaism, a rabbi has an essential mission. Derived from the Hebrew language, the title Rabbi means "My master." Every student addresses an expert of the Torah in this way.

"Rabbi is my job," Greenberg told the Global Times. "I run a Jewish center of Pudong with Shabbat services and also I go to different Jewish gatherings around the city and give lectures about Jewish history, knowledge and values."

Greenberg noted that there are many Jewish people around the world, who do not have a local Jewish education. "For these reasons, as a part of Chabad movement, we open centers

to provide Jewish education and holiday services to let Jewish people practice their culture and traditions," added the rabbi.

History of Shanghai Jews

There are many reasons for Jews to pay respect to Shanghai as well as other cities of China. Shanghai has granted asylum to around 30,000 Jews throughout history who suffered persecution.

The Hebrew School constructed a large installation and wall of newspapers chronologizing the three waves of Jewish migration to Shanghai. The first wave was marked by the arrival of the Sephardic Jews from Baghdad and Bombay in 1843.

In 1920, Jewish migrants of the first wave established the first Shanghai Jewish School and Ohel Rachel Synagogue. "Those Jews played an active and important role in the development of Shanghai through their activities in real estate and the stock exchange," one of the descriptions states.

The second wave of Jewish migration was caused by revolutions in Russia in the beginning of the 21st century. During that time, thousands of Russian Jews moved to Northeast China and later to Shanghai, numbering 5,000 at its peak.

The dramatic increase of European Jewish migrants in World War II turned Shanghai into a refuge for the third wave of Jews. Particularly, Ho Fengshan, Chinese Consul General in Vienna between 1938 and 1940, provided thousands of Jews with visas to Shanghai. By the end of the war, Shanghai was home to approximately 24,000 Jews.

After recalling the history of Jewish people in Shanghai, the children finished their performance with a song that thanked Chinese people for hosting the Jews through their history. "I say today, thank you and *xiexie* to the Chinese people!" they sang.

This article was written by Catherine Valley



Students of Pudong-Shanghai Hebrew School celebrate the end of the academic year with Jewish tutors and friends. Photos: Courtesy of Chabad Jewish Center of Pudong