

# **10 wounded IDF vacation in NY**

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## **Ten severely wounded IDF soldiers vacation in NY**

Ten severely wounded IDF soldiers are on a vacation in New York, accompanied by Chabad Terror Victims Project and hosted by Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side.

This past Tuesday night, four hundred members of Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side's community, joined ten IDF soldiers on a grand two hour cruise along the Hudson river. The cruise was an opportunity for the community to meet and thank ten heroes of Am Yisrael in a fun, relaxing and enjoyable setting while enjoying music, great food, open bar, and a variety of entertainment booths.

The group of ten severely wounded Israeli soldiers landed in New York this past Sunday with a grand welcome, from the community, amidst singing and dancing. During their ten day stay, the soldiers will be touring New York, Washington, The Hamptons and Niagara Falls. In the past two days they have toured the length and breadth of Manhattan, including the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, Madame Tussaud's, Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Times Square and Central Park.

When asked by a local community member what he hoped to achieve on this trip, Uri, a soldier responded, "I just want ten days of forgetting about my pain and suffering. I want a break from it all."

This is what Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side and Chabad Terror Victims Project's in Israel had in mind when organizing this trip – to offer these veterans ten days of worry-free relaxation and a much needed break from endless treatment and therapy.

Rabbi **Menachem Kutner** from Chabad Terror victims Project arrived with the soldiers on their trip as CTVP takes care of these soldiers year round. The soldiers are being hosted by Chabad Israel Center of the Upper East Side under the auspices of Rabbi **Uriel** and **Shevy Vigler**. The trip is being coordinated by Rabbi **Laima Barber** and Rabbi Uriel Vigler.

Jewish business leaders gathered together on Monday morning to give the soldiers an official and warm welcome from the Chabad Israel Center community in a private and exclusive affair held at the Chabad Israel Center. American veterans of war were present and welcomed the group to the USA. Rabbi Krasnianski of Chabad of the Upper East Side welcomed them to the community. Shimon Shkury and Issy Hacmun, two local businessmen, welcomed the group on behalf of Chabad Israel Center.

In all probability the highlight of the entire trip so far, was when the soldiers were brought to Chabad Israel Center's Alef Bet Preschool. The children awaited the group with songs they had prepared and cookies they had baked for our beloved soldiers. After the kids finished their songs, the soldiers started teaching the kids some of the songs that they remembered from kindergarten. Then the soldiers simply picked the kids up, hugged them, kissed them and started dancing with them. Truly an inspiration!

During the cruise, Rabbi Menachem Kutner introduced some of the soldiers to the community. The community was truly moved when the soldiers described in detail how they were injured. The climax was when Ben S, a soldier who lost one hand, and the other is paralyzed and suffered severe head injuries got

up and emotionally declared to his commanding officer Ron Lichy. Thank you for saving my life in Gaza – those were all the words he could utter...

The cruise ended when Uri R. ended his speech and thanked the entire community for their support and thanked them for bringing them to the United states and allowing them to have a wonderful vacation.

Rabbi Uriel Vigler then took the mike and corrected him. “It is not you who have to thank us. It is our pleasure and honor to be hosting these true heroes of our time. We are the ones who have to thank you.”