

FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR THOUGHTFUL JEWS

Dina Rosell meets the brains behind an innovative interactive presentation which addresses some of life's most intractable problems

SHLOMO Horwitz begins one of his exciting dramatic presentations, across continents and centuries, showing rather than merely telling his audience the links between traditional Jewish responses to a tricky situation and illustrating the effect that understanding the Torah approach can have on all our lives. The *Crossroads* experience brings to audiences of young people and adults ways of addressing and resolving some of life's knottiest problems in a compelling and original way that is totally in line with Torah guidelines.

Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher of 13th century Spain shares his insights about man's responsibility for preparing for war despite his faith in Hashem. After that we hear from Rav Moshe Chayim Luzzato of 18th century Italy as he explains the reason we must seriously engage in human effort while maintaining our faith. Potiphar, master of Joseph appears and shares insights about Joseph's ability to involve the AI-ty in his everyday affairs. Then we hear how on June 8th 1981 8 F16s from the IAF took off from the Etzion airbase and flew 600 miles to destroy Saddam's nuclear reactor near Baghdad, the only time in history a nuclear reactor was destroyed. We meet Yisroel Shafir, the seventh fighter pilot in the bombing formation, and he tells this frightening tale of war and intrigue, firsthand.

"Even the secular generals thought it was an impossible mission." Mr Horwitz, who learnt in Ner Yisroel in Baltimore where he was a talmid and musmach of Rabbi Yaskov Weinberg ZT"L, told the *Jewish Tribune* that "the miracles that took place in Baghdad in 1981, only recently declassified by the IDF, were possibly some of the most visible miracles seen for a long time." For this demonstration in the schools Mr Horwitz uses model planes, helping to give shape to Torah principles the children can relate to. The performance proves that Torah principles have the same valuable application today as they did thousands of years ago, causing the children to realise that everything that happens is part of a chain of events orchestrated by Divine



purpose. Bringing this fundamental fact home to a class-full of children through the power of dramatic performance has immediate impact and lasting effect.

Education in Shlomo Horwitz's view doesn't mean imposing knowledge on people; it means giving tangible form to an understanding that is waiting to be activated. When children grasp the root of a problem for the very first time, it awakens in them an appetite for knowledge. They feel, they connect and they understand. It's like a light bulb being turned on in their heads. The same principle holds true for adults, in the kiruv classes that Mr Horwitz teaches. Bringing the situation to life, through dramatic presentation, often with the use of volunteers from the audience, can yield to participants a deliciously empowering moment - "Now I realise what it's all about!"

How does he achieve it? With a basis

making out his case. Apart from giving the audience a legitimate response to modern conflicts, he is teaching Jewish history as it was seldom taught before, emphasising the continuity and relevance of Torah thought down the generations. The *Crossroads* presentations are not directed only towards offering participants a fresh insight into recurring life problems but they also trigger argument and discussion. People are encouraged to pose questions, sometimes the kind of questions they have never asked before. Mr Horwitz addresses the danger surrounding the use of the internet, that *verboten* area where so many young people and adults can go astray.

On his recent overwhelmingly successful visit to England, Mr Horwitz spoke to participants at Hasmonem boys and girls schools, Seed, Kesher, JFS and Immanuel College. Each presentation is slightly different, customised to the level and expectations of the audience. Children as well as adults appreciate the way philosophical concepts can be given life and meaning by the use of drama and timing. *Earning My Wings* examines the questions to which every one of us would like to know the answer. "Hashem, why is there so much suffering in this world? Why do we have to go through with it? Why don't You just put us in Olom Habo?" But if we didn't earn it, it wouldn't have the same meaning for us. All these challenges are really a fantastic gift from G-d so that we may deserve and appreciate Olom Habo.

of extensive Torah and Jewish historical knowledge and by means of careful thought and meticulous preparation of each topic, appropriate and intelligible for the group to which it is directed. What if you're a Jewish student on university campus, bombarded by a confusion of contradictory ideologies? Some of them can feel like an assault on identity. How will you know how to respond? How can you draw upon your Jewish heritage to empower you and fortify your beliefs? The proliferation and speed of modern media, a minefield of misinformation, is also a major threat to the well being of vulnerable young people.

The *Crossroads* programme encourages its participants to arrive at the point where the lanes of thinking and feeling converge into the well lit freeway of understanding. Mr Horwitz's fertile imagination produces a clutch of fictional characters, each one