

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

A 73-year-old's Bar Mitzva in an Australian blueberry patch

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

"Shalom Sivan, my name is Shoham Goldstein. I am an emissary in Australia for the Torah MiTzion movement. Several days ago all of the emissaries went on a trip in southern Australia. We wound up on a remote ranch where you pick your own blueberries and pay on your way out. All of a sudden the owner of the field, advanced in years, appeared. He said hello and asked us who we were. We told him we were from Israel and he said: 'My mother was once Jewish.'

We inquired further and learned that his mother fled Germany as a young child and due to the persecution and trauma suffered, she did not live a Jewish life in any respect. He was raised as a Christian. We asked him if he had ever heard about the concept of a Bar Mitzva. He said he had, but had never celebrated one. One of the guys brought his t'filin from the car, and we held a spontaneous Bar Mitzva celebration for James (Ya'akov) Lillywhite, aged 73, albeit 60 years late.

He put on tefillin for the first time in

his life, listened to us explain the meaning of the mitzva, and repeated every word of the blessings after us. Then we all danced in a circle around him, with much excitement on

our part and his. We are here working with the Jewish community, but had not yet had the experience of revealing to someone that he's Jewish.

On Shabbat, we will read parashat Yitro, standing at Mount Sinai as we receive the Ten Commandments. It is said that the souls of all of us were there at the foot of the mountain. This week we met one of them."

