

Beth Medrash Govoha's Yarchei Kallah How 48 Hours Transformed 400 People

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Harav Chaim Yisroel Weinfeld speaking at the *melaveh malkah*.



Greeting Harav Mattisyahu Salomon, *shlita*, *Mashgiach*, Beth Medrash Govoha, after he delivered a *sichas mussar*.



Harav Malkiel Kotler, *shlita*, (R), greeting Harav Zev Cohen.

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Every year, Rav Idi traveled to learn Torah in the *beis medrash* of Rav. Being three months' travel away, he departed right after Pesach, arrived with enough time to learn there for one day, and then began his journey home in order to be home in time for Sukkos. The *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 5b) says he was referred to as a "*bar bei Rav d'chad yomah* — a student of the school of Rav for a single day."

It was with this *maamar Chazal* that Harav Dovid Schustal, *shlita*, opened Beth Medrash Govoha's annual *yarchei kallah*. "[With just one day of learning] he was *zocheh* to be called a *bar bei Rav*! The anticipation before coming to the *beis medrash* of Rav, and the feelings which remained with him in the months after, made him a *bar bei Rav* for the entire year. From the *chad yoma* of learning, he became a *bar bei Rav* for the entire year."

"The same is true with the *yarchei kallah*," the *Rosh Yeshivah* told the audience. "The two days of learning make it so that when we leave, we leave laden with the *kedushas haTorah*, and that raises us to a higher *madreigah*. It makes us all worthy of the title of a *bar bei Rav*, not just for the two days we are here, but for the entire year."

The close to 400 participants of this year's program can attest to this. For four years now, BMG has been hosting an annual *yarchei kallah* at the Hyatt Regency in Princeton, New Jersey. It draws *baalei batim* from across America, with entire



Harav Dovid Schustal, *shlita*, *Rosh Yeshivah*, Beth Medrash Govoha, speaking at the *melaveh malkah*. (L-R): Harav Yehoshua Eichenstein, Harav Reuven Halpern, Harav Zev Cohen, Harav Chaim Yisroel Weinfeld, Harav Michael Frank, Harav Chaim Meyer Roth, Harav Eliezer Gewirtzman, Harav Yosef Kushner, Reb Moshe Yosef Drew.

chaburos flying in from various Jewish communities. Walk into the ballroom of the Hyatt and you'll be able to find people from just about every profession, from accountants to doctors to lawyers to college professors, and everything in between.

But for 48 hours, they check that identity at the door. For 48 hours, they identify as nothing but a *bar bei Rav*.

The *yarchei kallah* model follows that of BMG's incredibly popular Shviti program, which helps those who only have limited time for *limud haTorah* by bringing a tailor-made and elevated learning experience to them. Thanks to Shviti, people can now accomplish more in their learning than they would otherwise be able to in the time they have.

To help these *chaburos*, the Shviti team of *talmidei chachamim* crafts detailed curricula, focusing on a different *sugya* every

week. Each *chaburah* is then sent booklets of source material, or *mareh mekomos*, from which to learn. The *mareh mekomos* and the structured curricula lay the groundwork for those learning, and act as the key which allows them to access a depth in various *sugyos* that many haven't been able to obtain since their years learning in yeshivos.

Put simply, the Shviti program helps people overcome the primary obstacle which stands between them and the learning of Torah *b'iyun* — in depth. It allows people to circumvent the challenges and hassles of daily life, which would otherwise prevent them from feeling the connection with Torah learning they yearn for. Shviti opens the *sugyos* in a way that allows for an infusion of *ruchniyus*, one that, as Rav Dovid said, raises their *madreigah* in a tangible way.

The *yarchei kallah* builds on that. It

allows for its participants not just to get a Torah infusion, but to be totally immersed in Torah for two full days, learning relevant *sugyos* in the same way they are learned in yeshivah — by sitting in a *beis medrash* and learning.

The total immersion is the key. Harav Yeruchim Olshin, *shlita*, explained that the Torah's ability to purify people is compared by the Rambam to a *mikveh*. "For a *mikveh* to make someone *tahor*, he would need to go into it; he can't just put his hand or his foot in and expect it to work. That's not enough! The entire body needs to be immersed in the waters of the *mikveh*."

"So too is it with Torah," said the *Rosh Yeshivah*. "It isn't enough to put your hand into the *mei hadaas* for a short period; you have to immerse yourself in your entirety in the Torah. That's how you can achieve the *taharah* of Torah."

"That's this *yarchei kallah*," Rav Yeruchim continued. "*Der oilam ligt in lernin!*"

Rabbanim who came to give *shiurim*, and first-time participants, were blown away by the level of learning and the sheer intensity that was tangible throughout the hotel. Harav Michael Frank, Rav of Kehilas Ohr HaTorah in Silver Spring, testified to the transformative aspect of the *yarchei kallah*, starting his *shiur* by telling the assembled that being able to be a part of it changes his entire year.

Harav Zev Cohen, Rav of Adas Yeshurun and *Rosh Kollel*, Choshen Mishpat in Chicago, made this point as well in the beginning of his *shiur*. "I am *zocheh* to have a *kollel* in my shul, as well as a morn-



Listening to *divrei hisorerus* from Beth Medrash Govoha *Rosh Yeshivah* Harav Yisroel Neuman, *shlita*, after *Shacharis* on Sunday morning.



Ris'cha d'Oraisa.



Mashgiach Harav Mattisyahu Salomon, *shlita*, arriving at the *yarchei kallah*.



Harav Yehoshua Krupenia delivering a *shiur* at the *yarchei kallah*.



Harav Zev Cohen answering a *she'eilah* at the *yarchei kallah*.

ing *kollel* and an evening *kollel* — so I am *zocheh* to be in the *beis medrash* for many hours each day. But I haven't experienced anything like this since I left Lakewood. It was unbelievable. The *kol Torah* that is here, I almost couldn't hear my *chavrusa*! I got so energized from it — I feel like I can go [learn] the next 48 hours straight."

He isn't alone in feeling that way. The *yarchei kallah* grows by an average of 50 percent each and every year, and almost 90 percent of participants return the following year as well. Once experienced, it is hard to do without it.

The incredible level of *ameilus baTorah* means that for two days, the ballroom of the Princeton Hyatt Regency is transformed into a *beis medrash*, and its occupants into *yungeleit*. One participant, Mr. Abe Penzer Esq., of Lakewood, compared it to *Gan Eden shel Mattah*, expressing his *hakaras hatov* to Harav Malkiel Kotler, *shlita*, for the program in which he was so immersed that he wasn't even aware that there was a coffee room set up outside the *beis medrash*.

The *sugya* the *yarchei kallah* focused on was *s'chiras poalim* — the *halachos* of employment. Harav Chaim Yisroel Weinfeld, Rav of Kahal Toras Chaim in Brooklyn, underscored the importance of the *limud*, and lauded those who came for two days to learn it. In a powerful *drashah* centered on the idea of the *ruchniyus* aspects one's monetary possessions have, Rav Weinfeld read the words of the *Bnei Yissaschar*, who quoted Harav Mendel Riminover regarding the deleterious effects non-kosher money can have on the spiritual futures of one's children.

"You can give your children to eat something that has *kedushah*, [which is something bought with] money that was earned honestly, without any *ch'shoshos*. That helps a child grow! But how can a person know unless he learns? In order to ask a *she'eilah* you have to know as well!"

"I want you to know how *chashuv* it is that you are choosing to learn these *sugyas*," Rav Weinfeld continued. "Usually, people only ask the Rav about things like kitchen *she'eilos*. But questions that pertain to *dinei mamonos* aren't asked as often. People need to want to know what might be a *she'eilah* — and to ask it!"

Harav Chaim Meir Roth, Rav of Bais Medrash Sterling Forest and *Dayan* of Bais Din Meysharim in Lakewood, also touched on the unique impressiveness of those who came to the *yarchei kallah*. Taking part, he said, builds his own *emunah*, "not only in the *Ribbono shel Olam* and the Torah, but in *Klal Yisrael*. Seeing people who work the entire day, coming to sit and learn the way they do [at the BMG *yarchei kallah*] you don't need any more *raayos* that Torah is *min haShamayim*!"

"Come into this room," said Rav Chaim Meir, "And you will see the biggest proof that Torah is *min haShamayim*."

At the *yarchei kallah*, the "*yungeleit*" truly got the best of both worlds. While the focus of the program was the learning, organizers made sure that there was nothing lacking in the support needed to facilitate a top-of-the-line learning experience. Luxurious accommodations, deli-



Reb Zev Samel introducing Harav Shimon Alster, *shlita*, at the *siyum* closing dinner. (L-R): Harav Zev Cohen, Harav Yehoshua Krupenia, Harav Shimon Alster, Harav Aryeh Malkiel Kotler, *shlita*, Reb Zev Samel, Harav Reuven Halpern, Harav Michael Frank, Harav Yosef Kushner, Harav Avrohom Yeshaya Frand, Harav Yosef Housman.



Harav Moshe Scheinberg (L) learning with members of his shul from Chicago at the *yarchei kallah*.



Learning at the *yarchei kallah*.

cious food, and, yes, a coffee room, all combined to create, in the words of one participant, an "unparalleled euphoric atmosphere" which helped those who came to *shteig*.

And *shteig* they did. The atmosphere was indeed electric. The *Maggidei Shiur* were educational and informative, plumbing the depths of the *sugyas* while imparting practical advice. At the end of the second day's *sedarim*, a halachic panel was held, exploring different possible scenarios, and what *halachah* mandates.

The culmination of the *yarchei kallah* was a grand dinner, where Lakewood *Rosh Yeshivah* Harav Malkiel Kotler and Harav Shimon Alster, *shlita*, Rav of Bais Medrash Yaakov Yitzchok in Brooklyn and *Rosh Yeshivah* of Cliffwood

Yeshiva, addressed everyone for one last time, commending them and recognizing the importance of what they had done, and urging them to continue to build on it, and to grow even more in the days ahead.

Rav Shimon cited words of the Chazon Ish in *Emunah U'Bitachon*, where he wrote that at times people give up on their own *aliyah b'Torah*, and instead focus all their efforts on the hope that they will have better luck with their children's education. "I don't believe the Chazon Ish could have been talking about the *olam* here," said Rav Alster. "Those who came here to learn understand that the way to raise future generations is by their own learning. Every

morning in *birchos haTorah* we make a *brachah*, '*laasok b'divrei Sorah*.' It's only through '*esek haTorah*' — like this *yarchei kallah* — that we can come to the *v'haarev na* — the sweetness of Torah, which in turn makes it so that *tze'tzeinu* — our children and grandchildren, become *lomdei Sorasecha* — learners of Your Torah, and most importantly, it is what makes it that they should be *yodei Sh'mecha* — becoming *baalei emunah*."

It was the *drashah* of Harav Malkiel Kotler which had the most powerful impact. The Lakewood *Rosh Yeshivah* reminded everyone that a person can work for a living, and still be *m'kayem* the words of Rav N'horai (*Kiddushin* 82) who says "*meiniach ani kol umnus she'b'olam v'eini melamed es b'ni elah Torah* — I will forsake all occupations in the world, and I will only teach my son Torah."

"*Umnus*," Rav Malkiel said, "does not mean a *parnassah*-giver. *Umnus* means what a person is busy with — what his primary focus is in life. When a person needs to earn a *parnassah*, that is what usually occupies him most. But it isn't the '*umnus*' that gives him his *parnassah*."

"Rav N'horai says," continued Rav Malkiel, "My son's life's focus is Torah. It could be that he's going to have to make a *parnassah* too. And for that I'm going to teach him a *melachah kallah u'nekiyah*. But it's not going to be his *umnus*. That will be Torah."

"When a person asks 'what do you do,' the answer is 'I learn *Pesachim*!' Because that's your *umnus* — that's what you do! That feeling of *Gan Eden* that was experienced here over these two days should go with you the entire year. That feeling will help you make Torah your *umnus*!"

Leaving the refuge of the *beis medrash* at the end of the *yarchei kallah* and returning to the mundaneness that is everyday life can be dispiriting. However, those checking out from the Hyatt Regency in Princeton left with a spring in their step. Because the two days they had spent totally immersed in Torah, *davening* and learning at the level that is experienced in yeshivah made an indelible impact that is definitional. They left with the knowledge that they are worthy of being a *bar bei Rav*, and they returned home with the awareness that their *umnus* is still Torah.

To bring the incredible learning experience that is Shivti to your shul, *kollel*, or *chabura*, call Avraham Colman at 732-367-1060 X4250. or via email at Shivti@bmg.edu.