

CONNECTIONS



לכל זמן ועת לכל חפץ תחת השמים: (קהלת ג' א')

זמן היה לאדם הראשון שיכנס לגן עדן ושיצא ממנו, זמן היה לנח שיכנס אל התיבה ושיצא ממנה, זמן היה לאברהם שתנתן לו המילה, וזמן היה לבניו שימולו בשני מקומות, אחת במצרים ואחת במדבר [מ"ר]:

Life is made up of seasons and times of passage. There is an opportune time for everything and the vigilant amongst us, try not to miss an opportunity...

There was a time for אדם הראשון to enter גן עדן and there was a time for him to leave it. There was a defined period during which נח would reside in the secure confines of the תיבה. And a בעתו ובזמנו was and is ברית מילה...

The זמן ועת during one's youth, that one finds himself in the confines of the בית המדרש is meant to serve as a reservoir of experience and energy from which one may draw for the rest of his life. Fortunate are those who remain connected to the בית המדרש which nurtured them. Even more fortunate are those whose very lives exemplify the ideals and energy of their בית מדרש.

In this – the “mid-זמן” Connections #19, you will read about a number of individuals who very much exemplify the רוח of the ישיבת תורת משה of בית מדרש. You will read about our Super-Accomplished חבר - Rabbi Daniel Travis- and particularly his latest book “Encounters with Greatness” which touches upon his relationship with the Rosh Yeshiva Shlita. You will read about Rabbi Boruch Vann who recently left the cozy confines of our

בית מדרש and the גן עדן that is Yerushalayim – to take a position of הרבצת התורה – doing kiruv, “Toras Moshe style”. You will read about Rabbi Akiva Herman’s Megilas Necha project (in Yeshiva) which keeps the zman “zmanning” and has become a Toras Moshe mainstay. With the passage of another year, Ner Michoel – Ohr Miriam has made another *siyum*, this time on Seder Nashim – the 3rd Seder of 6. And finally... sadly... we say goodbye to a close friend, a friend with who we share our memories of Yeshiva... עת לבכות... עת לספוד ... Rabbi Yisroel Meir Bleich z”l...

May we in the Ner Michoel family be blessed with only *be-suros tovos* and *nachas* and may we all soon meet and greet משיח צדקנו... במהרה בימינו...



Dan Sinowitz
Rabbi Daniel Sinowitz



Shmuel Weiner
Rabbi Shmuel Weiner

MEGILLAS NECHA CONTINUES WITH TREMENDOUS SUCCESS

The end of a long winter *z'man* can be a challenge for many people. In Yeshivas Toras Moshe, the *hasmoda* is invigorated by the annual “Megillas Necha” program, which has become highly successful in recent years.

Rabbi Akiva Herman – a member of Toras Moshe’s Kollel – was a second year *bochur* when he initiated the learning

program in Yeshiva. The program begins two months before Purim, corresponding to approximately twice the number of *dapim* in the Mesechta, and participants learn an *amud* a day in Maseches Megillah during non-Seder hours. All the *mesaymim* are entered into a raffle where the chance of winning has grown over the years, in proportion to the number of participants.

The program is named Megillas Necha *le'illuy nishmas* Akiva's grandmother, a Holocaust survivor who passed away of the 6th day of Adar. Her only son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Eliezer Herman of Toronto – Akiva's parents – have sponsored the program from the beginning.



Eight people joined for the first year--the prize was a set of Kovetz Shiurim. "Several years into the program", recalls Akiva, "Rabbi Eliyahu Yaari, an *avreich* in Yeshiva, approached me with an offer. He was very impressed with what we were doing, and wanted to supplement the raffle prize – *le'illuy nishmas* a relative of his – by awarding every participant with 20 shekel toward the purchase of a Gemara Megillah (or other *seforim*). This really enhanced our efforts, because up until then many people didn't have their own Gemaros. Now, everyone was able to purchase the specific type of Gemara they desired, and it was their very own; they could write notes in them, underline whatever they felt necessary, and so on.

"Megillas Necha was in its fifth year when I left Toras Moshe and went to Lakewood. R' Efraim Berger, a fellow *bochur* who is now an *avreich* in Toras Moshe's Kollel, offered to run it during my absence.

"Personally, I like to make my *siyum* on *Vov Adar*, which is my grandmother's *yahrzeit*. Most of the guys make it during their *shiur's* Purim *seuda* at their *rebbe's* home, where it adds to the *ruach* and inspires others to join next year. People also try to recruit their friends because we add another raffle for each group of ten that signs up; this increases the odds of winning. Each raffle has three winners: the third and lowest prize is a 'cake card', redeem-

able for eleven pieces of the world famous 'ToMo cake'; the second prize is a 150-shekel *seforim* certificate, while the grand prize is a 300-shekel certificate. Last year we had sixty guys, so there were six raffles. We added two new features last year: if you weren't able to finish by Purim, we extended the deadline until Pesach; there was also a voluntary 'bechina' of *chazarah* questions – anyone with a high score was included in a separate raffle for a Sefer Birchas Shmuel.

"Two new things are in the plans for this year. Anyone who submits a *shtickel Torah* he was *mechadesh* on the Masechta will be entered into a separate raffle for two exciting prizes: a 'ToMo Seforim package', which is a cherished collection of personal *seforim* that belonged to the Rosh Yeshiva and the *Rebbeim*; and a year's supply of 'ToMo cake'. Another addition this year is Rabbi Yehoshua Berman's new *chazarah* program, with an award of 100 shekel for anyone who participates. All this has already generated a great deal of enthusiasm; we hope to publish the *chiddushim* in time for Purim".

Rabbi Boruch Warren has been part of Megillas Necha for about fifteen years. "Due to the *hashpa'ah* of Rav Mosheh Twersky *zatzal* and *yb"l* Rav Michel Shurkin", he notes, "many in the Yeshiva prepare themselves for each Yom Tov by involving themselves in the Torah of that particular *chag*. Finishing Mesechta Megillah with Megillas Necha helps prepare for Purim because many of the halachos of the day are rooted in the Gemara. Listening to Megillah *laining* after reviewing all the *drashos* of Chazal in the first *perek* makes it so much more meaningful.

"It also provides much-needed *chizuk* for the end of the *z'man*. It's hard to be late for seder when you're already in the beis medrash because you have to finish today's *amud*!"

OHR MIRIAM CELEBRATES SIYUM SEDER NASHIM

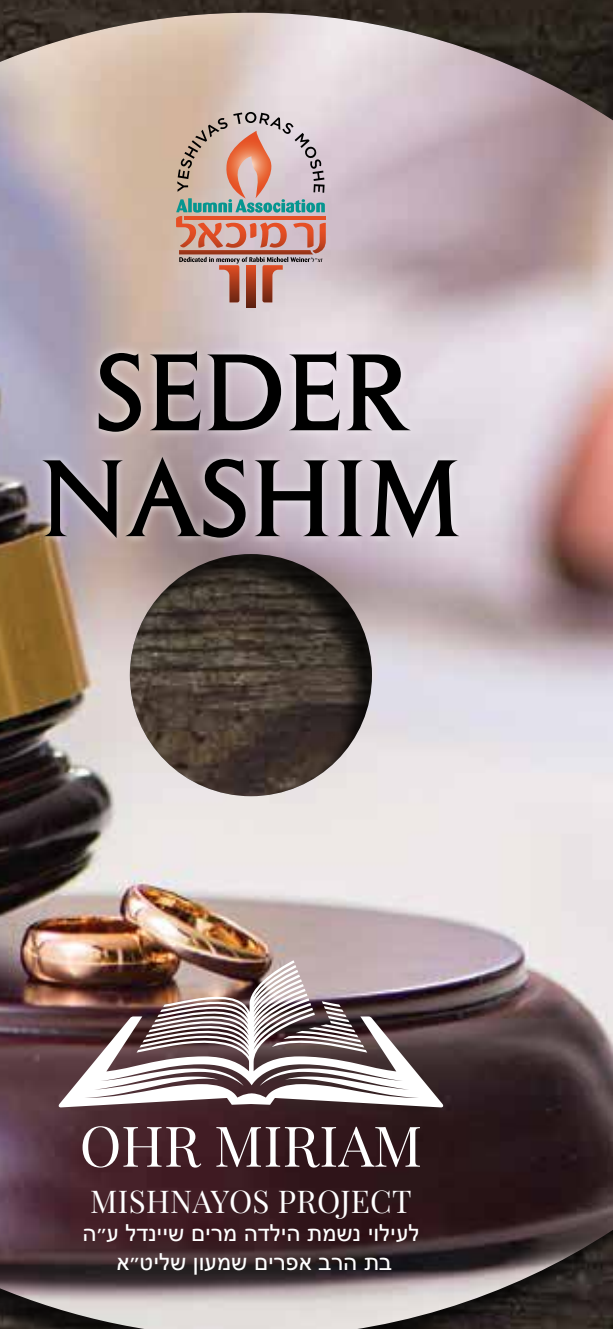
Ner Michael's Mishnayos Project recently celebrated its siyum on Seder Nashim. A festive *seudas mitzva* was hosted by Rabbi and Mrs. Sinowitz in their home, with all of the local participants in attendance. The project is named Ohr Miriam, and is dedicated *l'ilui nishmas* Rabbi Sinowitz's niece, Miriam Sinowitz, a"h (Miriam Shaindel bas Reb Ephraim Shimon).

Shmuel Michaels, one of the *mesaymim*, delivered words of *chizuk* and *brocha* at the *siyum*. He spoke about the importance of limud Torah as part of learning *b'chabura* and how reaching this milestone with a *tzibbur* makes it all the more special.

The event reached its climax with the arrival of a surprise guest – Rabbi Avrohom

Meiselman. Rabbi Sinowitz warmly welcomed him, explaining to the attendees that he really did not want to make him feel obligated to come, but while speaking with Rav Avromi he had simply mentioned something about the *siyum* due to his great excitement.

Rav Avromi, as many are aware, appreciates when *talmidim* learn *mishnayos* because it gives them a great deal of *be'kiyus* that complements Toras Moshe's emphasis on learning *be'iyun*. He spoke to the *mesaymim* about the importance of being consistent about a *seder* – even if it's only for a few minutes each day – and how remarkable it is that people are committed and make sure to come every single night. The *siyum* coincided with Rav Mosheh Twersky's *yahrzeit*; Rav Av-



romi had been at a *siyum* held *le'illui nishmaso* on that same evening, but he made the effort to attend the Mishnayos *siyum* as well, in order to show his support.

"Boruch Hashem", Rabbi Sinowitz remarked, "we have been *zocheh* to finish another Seder together as a *tzibbur*, as part of the Ohr Miriam Mishnayos Project. This marks our third Siyum, as well as the halfway point toward finishing Shas Mishnayos. It's been a long ride of constancy, consistency and the accumulation of *yedios* upon *yedios*. May Hashem give us the *zechus* to push on further... one Mishna... one Perek... one Mesechta... one Seder at a time..."

R' BORUCH VANN CONTINUES HIS HASHPA'AH IN GREAT NECK, NEW YORK

Rabbi Boruch Vann recently left Toras Moshe's Kollel for Great Neck, New York, where he entered the *kiruv* field as Senior Jewish Educator for JMAP (Jewish Makom for Professionals). Rabbi Vann, who grew up in Passaic, New Jersey, came to Toras Moshe from Yeshivas Ner Yisroel of Baltimore. He spent five years in Toras Moshe as a *bochur*, and returned for another five-plus years with his wife Bracha (nee Samber, a niece of Rabbi Avrohom Samber).

"Over the years", Rabbi Vann recalls with gratitude, "the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Meiselman, was a tremendous source of guidance for me; we learned second *seder* together for one *z'man*. Even the fact that I was influenced by other *mashpi'im* outside of Yeshiva – among them Rav Reuven Leuchter – is also to the Rosh Yeshiva's credit. He encouraged me and gave me the flexibility to draw from many sources. It certainly takes an open-minded *rebbe* to produce open-minded *talmidim*."



"There are many ways that the Rosh Yeshiva's example continues to influence and inspire me. I was always amazed at the way he respected people, not necessarily because they were *talmidei chachomim*, but because of their *ehrllichkeit*. I often

reflect on the way he forged his own path, and didn't follow the beaten trail. I admired how he always involved himself in building and developing individuals as well as entire communities while pursuing his own learning and growth in Torah. Whether in Yerushalayim, or in his earlier days in Los Angeles and Chicago, he always gave of his own time to benefit others, lifting them up while maintaining his own learning schedule with great personal sacrifice.

"In my time in Yeshiva, I had spoken with the Rosh Yeshiva many times about what I wanted to do in life. I always wanted to be a *rav* because I wanted to help people through adult education. After feeling out what *rabbanus* actually entails, I found there was not as

much adult education as I thought. I was seriously considering an offer as a Rosh Kollel in an out-of-town community when the Rosh Yeshiva's guidance gave me the clarity I needed to make the right decision. I realized that what I truly wanted was to go into *kiruv*; I accepted my current position, where my chief responsibility is to socially engage young professionals, establish relationships with them, and motivate them to become *frum bnei Torah* and raise children who will be *talmidei chachomim*."

In the short time Rabbi Vann has been in Great Neck, he has already impacted hundreds of people through his evening classes, which are especially geared to the young men and women in the area who don't have much of a Torah background. The classes focus on topics such as *emunah*, finding one's *bashert*, free will, and the like; delivered with Rabbi Vann's charisma and warmth, they inspire the audience to feel good about their Yiddishkeit and strive to become better human beings. Once a month, Rabbi and Mrs. Vann host about twenty people for a meaningful Friday evening *seuda* at their home, with dessert and inspiration following the meal that is open to the public and lasts long into the night.

In the near future, Rabbi Vann hopes to have a small group of people learning Torah on a regular basis, with a larger group that is involved in learning on a somewhat lower, non-textual level, by attending his classes, and an even wider circle that is just socially connected, acquainting themselves with the *frum* world and what it has to offer.

"There's a general *hashkafa* in the world of *kiruv rechokim*", Rabbi Vann concludes, "that the essence of what we're doing

by helping people become *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos* is *chessed*. The Rosh Yeshiva gave me a *chinuch* that is very much at odds with that approach. I was taught that *kiruv* is *limud haTorah*, giving people the necessary tools to become *lomdei Torah* and *yirei shomayim*. The difference between being *mechanech* young *talmidim* in Yeshiva and being *mekarev* young professionals is only in the *chitzoniyus*, but in the *penimius* they are very much the same; you're striving for the same degree of success, that the final product will be a *talmid chochom*."



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RABBI DANIEL YAAKOV TRAVIS PUBLISHES ENCOUNTERS WITH GREATNESS

Rabbi Daniel Yaakov Travis, a Toras Moshe alumnus from the Yeshiva's early years, is a highly-respected *posek*, Rosh Kollel, sought-after speaker and author of over twenty *seforim* on *halacha*, *mussar* and *hashkafa*.

Rabbi Travis' works include the very popular *Praying with Joy* series, and *Takanas HaShavim*, a halacha *sefer* that deals with *sheilos* involving *ba'alei teshuvah* and *kiruv* professionals. The newly released *Encounters with Greatness*, however, is a project that Rabbi Travis chose to delegate to another acclaimed author, Rabbi Nachman Seltzer.

A memorable conversation with Rav Shlomo Wolbe *zatzal* convinced Rabbi Travis of his obligation to publicize the chain of fascinating *hashgacha pratit* events that propelled him on his life's journey, beginning as an aspiring young athlete in a prestigious public high school in the Bronx, through a catastrophic car accident and a seemingly endless stream of challenge and adversity that helped him discover his true destiny.

"I approached Rabbi Seltzer because I recognized that it's difficult for a person to view his own life with the objectivity required to produce a work of this nature," Rabbi Travis explains. "He convinced me that this was much more than my personal story; it had to be portrayed as a tapestry of experiences, insights, and inspiration that I had gained from *gedolei Yisroel*. This was the way *Encounters with Greatness* was born."

As the subtitle suggests, the book reflects on the guidance Rabbi Travis gained from his close connection with fourteen outstanding *gedolim* of our generation. Their power, he explains, lies in their mastery of what he calls "the paradigm shift". "If I came into a meeting with one of them looking at something one way, they were able to change the way I saw it with a few well-chosen words."

Three chapters in the book are dedicated to Rabbi Travis' connection with Rabbi Moshe Meiselman, beginning with a young

Daniel Yaakov getting his entrance *farher* at Toras Moshe. Despite the great difficulty he displayed when he tried to read the Gemara, Rabbi Meiselman recognized his tremendous determination and potential, and accepted him on that basis. "Toras Moshe provided the perfect environment for me," Rabbi Travis explains. "It was a place where I could do what I needed most: learn Torah undistracted and permanently lock up everything I had been doing up until that time — forever."

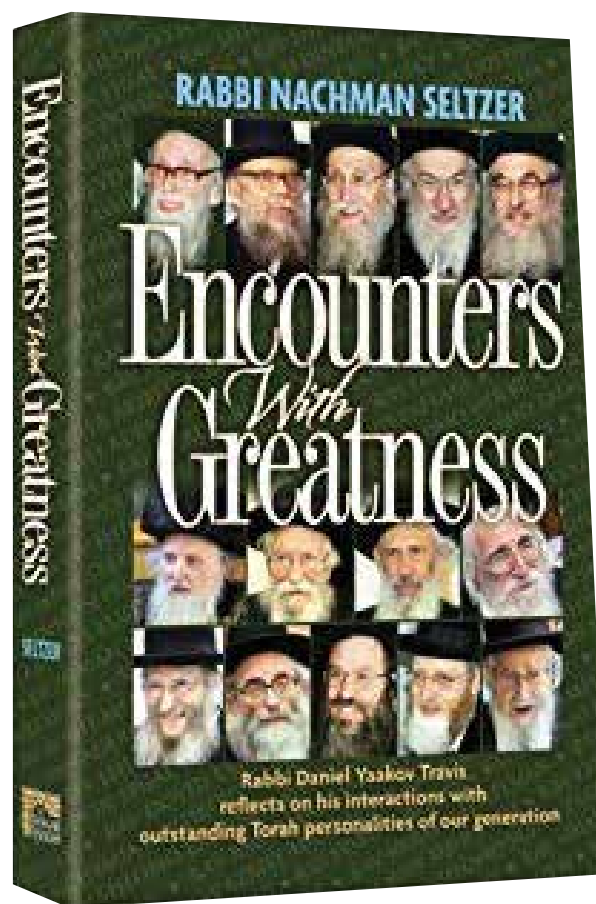
"I admired Rav Meiselman and how I wanted to be like him and the rest of the yeshiva's *rebbeim*, because to me they epitomized what life was all about. Despite all the talk I had heard back in America about a glowing future at Harvard and Yale, I constantly felt a sense of emptiness. Learning Torah at Toras Moshe was like emerging from a vacuum into a sea of meaning."

Rabbi Travis spent about five years in Toras Moshe; after only three years, he was already giving *halacha shiurim*. The Rosh Yeshiva strongly encouraged him to write, especially in the area of halacha.

While in Toras Moshe, Rabbi Travis also developed a meaningful *kesher* with the Mashgiach, Rabbi Elchonon Fishman, who directed him to his own *rebbei*, Rav Shlomo Brevda *zatzal*. In describing his eighteen year relationship with Rav Brevda, Rabbi Travis says that he "climbed down into Gehinnom with me and bore the fire at my side".

Rabbi Travis has lived in Har Nof for the past fifteen years; he frequently visits Rabbi Meiselman's home, where he is *sho'el eitzah* on various issues. "I appreciate the Rosh Yeshiva's expertise in both the world of Torah as well as, *lehavdil*, the world at large", he explains. "As I describe in the book, I find that he is one of the last 'holdouts' on integrity."

"Everything I have is from Toras Moshe. If not for the Rosh Yeshiva, I would never have made the decision to settle in Eretz Yisroel and pursue a career in *hora'ah*."



REMEMBERING BELOVED ALUMNUS REB YISROEL MEIR BLEICH



This past Elul, the greater Toras Moshe family lost an outstanding *ben Torah*, *baal middos* and *ben aliyah* with the passing of Reb Yisroel Meir Bleich at the age of 47, following a difficult illness.

Yisroel Meir was an exceptional *ish ha'chessed* who was always eager to help everyone, but would never trouble anyone else for his own needs. This becomes even more remarkable when we consider that he faced tremendous physical setbacks in his life. He had every excuse to claim that getting anywhere in life was out of his reach; instead, he found the fortitude to lift himself above them all. His story is a shining example that obligates us all. As Hillel said, *Im ein ani li, mi li?*

"Yisroel Meir was about sixteen years old when he came to Toras Moshe in the Yeshiva's early years, about the same time I did", recalls Rabbi Daniel Sinowitz. "He was two years younger than the rest of us; he grew up in Eretz Yisroel and we were Americans, and learning was difficult for him. Still, he was a very sweet fellow and everyone liked him, not out of empathy but simply because he was truly a nice person."

"He always tried his best and never gave up. As an older *bochur*, he ran the kitchen and did a lot of the administrative work in the Yeshiva. When I was looking to buy an apartment and needed a mortgage, who did I find sitting behind the desk at the bank – my friend Yisroel Meir! Amazingly, he moved up from the Yeshiva's kitchen to the bank! When I went back to the bank a few years later, I didn't see him so asked where he was. While working at the bank, he attended law school at night and had become an attorney. He got himself into proper physical shape, which was quite a challenge for someone in his situation, got married and raised a family of six children. He simply never let his handicaps and difficulties get in the way; he knew that it was up to his own courage and will. He suffered very much at the end of his life, but there's a lesson for all of us here: he made himself into an accomplished person, an achiever, and a *ba'al chessed*. There are many stories about the legal work he did pro bono for people in financial distress."

"He left us in a sad way, too early, but not without a lesson that we can all learn from his exalted life."

Yehi zichro boruch.



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CHANUKAH MESIBA

