

TASTING THE SWEETNESS



by C.B. Weinfeld

“Regarding Torah Shebaal Peh, **THE BEGINNING MAY BE BITTER, BUT THE END IS SO SWEET.**”

These were the powerful words of Rav Elya Brudny, who, along with Rav Moshe Boruch Newman, Rav Ephraim Wachsmann, and other prominent Roshei Yeshiva, graced the dais during a special celebration this past Motzoei Shabbos for several hundred bar mitzvah bochurim, as part of the Vhaarev Na program.

The Valley Terrace Hall in Monsey was filled with a heartwarming sight – hundreds of fresh-faced young boys, most having recently celebrated their bar mitzvah, or are preparing for that special day.

They were accompanied by their ‘best friends,’ the masechtos of gemara they had mastered through multiple chazaros, reviewing the dafim again and again, until they achieved ownership, an incredibly sweet accomplishment.

So many young men start learning

gemara with high hopes, but give up during the early stages, before they have an opportunity to make the masechta a part of themselves, so that it resonates within them.

That is the purpose of the revolutionary Vhaarev Na program, introduced eight years ago by Rabbi Dovid Newman for high school bochurim, and recently adapted for pre-bar mitzvah bochurim who are getting their feet wet. The Monsey branch is led by Rabbi Dovid Delouya, and Rabbi Zisha Kushner, while the Lakewood branch is led by Rabbi Shmuel Newman.

This Motzoei Shabbos celebration, accompanied by a festive fleishig meal, highlighted the accomplishments of over 150 bar mitzvah bochurim in Monsey, and over 50 from Lakewood. These boys have been introduced to the program, which involves constant chazara, repeated review of every daf they learn in honor of their bar mitzvah. The most common masechtos chosen by the boys are *Brachos, Sukkah, Taanis, Megillah, Chagigah, Rosh Hashonoh, and Tamid.*

As one of the enthusiastic young men who got up to speak attested, “I now realize that chazarah is not a burden—but such a geshmak!”

“I was at the dentist recently, and I didn’t have a gemara, but I had time to learn. I just sat back on the chair, closed my eyes, and reviewed the entire gemara

Bar mitzvah bochurim celebrate their sweetest accomplishment

baal peh,” echoed another dedicated mesayem of the program.

Through chazarah, chazarah, and more chazarah, the masechta becomes absorbed in one’s sinews, kneaded into the kishkes, always available— even without a Bais Medrash or sefer handy.

Perhaps a third young man expressed it best, when he declared, “Torah is a mountain to climb, but chazarah is the ladder that makes it possible!”

“Now that the sugya is part of me, it’s so much easier to delve into the

meforshim on my own,” echoed another bochur.

Several of the young speakers expressed the idea that the gemara, which they now “own,” has become their best friend. What a beautiful way to begin a lifetime ‘career’ of Torah learning with geshmak!

Enhanced by melodious neginah with Shloimy Daskal, the evening’s program centered around the moving siyum of the bochurim, each of whom received a shtender as a special gift.

Rabbi Dovid Newman delivered a heartwarming address, telling the bochurim, “What song are they singing in shomayim now? *Chazu, chazu...* my beloved children...”

Before he recited kaddish, Rabbi Newman asked the boys to have extra kavanah during the recital of Omein yehei shmei rabbah, which has tremendous koach in Shomayim. The mothers and Bubbies in the Ezras Noshim were overcome with emotion as the sweet sounds of these budding talmidei chachomim rose in unison.

The inspiring siyum and rousing speeches segued into a round of spirited dancing, as a gemara was lifted high up on a chair, and concluded with a soul-stirring kumzits. The bochurim sat in the darkened hall, illuminated by the glow of flickering candles. They expressed their yearning, their joy, and their determination to continue growing and learning, imbuing the holy gemara not just in their brains, but in their hearts and souls.

What better gift can one give a bar mitzvah bochur than the knowledge that everything he will learn—for all eternity, will remain within him, never to be forgotten? What a powerful antidote to the hopelessness, frustration, and even depression that haunts many young men who have given up before they have begun to taste its sweetness?

Vhaarev Na is in the process of expanding to other cities and states across the globe.

For more information please email Rabbi Dovid Newman at vhaarevna@gmail.com or visit vhaarevna.com.