



by Rabbi Shlomo Weinrib

There is a certain uplifting feeling which Simchas Torah brings. The lively dancing, men, bochurim, and children of all ages joining hands, their hearts fusing in their shared love for what gives them joy, fulfillment, solace and direction – the precious Torah. The feeling of that Yom Tov is inimitable. Or almost inimitable. One thing that never fails to ignite the Simchas Torah spark of passion which lies in our neshamos, that deep connection to the Torah, is a Vhaarev Na event. There, every bochur is burning with the joy and love of Torah that many of us experience only at the height of Simchas Torah.

This past Sunday, March 21st saw yet another Vhaarev

Na Simchas Hatorah at the Valley Terrace in Monsey. Bochurim from the many yeshivos that are part of the Vhaarev Na program came together on the very first day of their bein hazmanim to celebrate a winter zman of true kinyan haTorah and renew their commitment with kabbalos for chazara over bein hazmanim.

The event began with a retzufos seder, over 600



bochurim taking time off from their bein hazmanim break to chazer once again, for three, four, and some

even six or more hours! After the seder, Rabbi David Nakash addressed the crowd, relaying the message that is the key to the Vhaarev Na program: The sweetness of Torah is not immediately felt; it is only through effort and perseverance that its intoxicating sweetness can be tapped into.

The dancing that followed, was so aptly described by Rabbi Efraim Glassman, Menahel of Torah V'daas in his speech. "We are sitting now in a chasuna hall where usually everyone is dancing to be mesameach one chosson. Tonight, we're here celebrating with 600 chassanim!" He went on to explain that the resounding hatzlacha of the Vhaarev Na program is not despite the fact that there are

no tests, contests and production-based rewards. Rather, it is actually because of that. With the Vhaarev Na program there are no external pressures or motivators. This is what allows and enables one's inner motivator, his neshama, to come alive and thrive.



And it was so clearly evident in the dancing that each bochur felt like a chosson at his own chasuna. The energy in the ballroom pulled you into its lively circles, linking the hundreds of neshamos in one immense, uplifting experience.

While the crowd was enjoying a lavish meal, they heard from bochurim currently in the Vhaarev Na program how chazara is impacting their lives. One bochur mentioned how chazara has made gemara his best friend. "When you come to camp, you don't make a best friend overnight. It's made by spending much time, playing and schmoozing with each other. It's the same with gemara. Chazara is spending much time and "schmoozing" with your gemara, and that's how it becomes your best friend." Another bochur told of the "Vhaarev Na transformation" he underwent in 12th grade under his rebbi, Rabbi Dovid Newman, founder of the Vhaarev Na program. "I always learned, but gemara was a subject, and I learned because I had to. Through Vhaarev Na, I began to love learning, and only when you love learning can you sit and learn for six hours b'retzifus, with no phone, no clock, just you and your gemara!"

Zalman Brown, a Vhaarev Na alumnus, shared how he had gone through the Vhaarev Na program in 12th grade, and after Beis Medrash and a short stint in Eretz Yisrael, came back to America and went to work. "I was making money, had nice clothing, a nice car, and was living what the world calls 'freedom.'" He would set aside time every day to chazer his Vhaarev Na





masechta, and each time he got up from his gemara, he would feel it tugging at his neshama, knowing in his heart that this is the real thing. "The only real joy I had was when I was sitting in front of my Maseches Sukkah and plugging away, blatt after blatt." After three years in business, the realization that real satisfaction can only come from true kinyan haTorah, led him to go back to full-time learning, and he is now married in kollel, and "living it up."

Rabbi Dovid Newman addressed the crowd, quoting Rashi that says one of Yisro's seven names was Chovev, because he loved the Torah. Yet Rashi later says that Moshe wanted to bring Yisro closer to the Torah. If Yisro already loved Torah, why did he need to be brought closer to the Torah? Harav Elya Ber Wachtfogel, explained that

loving Torah as an outsider is a far cry from actually taking an active role and experiencing the joy of Torah.

Rabbi Newman brought this point out by noting the difference between a fan and a player. They both share an intense passion for



the game, but that's where their similarities end. A fan loves the game and claps and cheers for his team, but can't actually play. A player is much more than someone who just loves the game and takes every game to heart. He is actively

involved, experiencing the game himself.

Before joining Vhaarev Na, many of you bochurim knew that Torah is chashuv, and you wanted to learn, or at least wanted to want to learn, but you were just spectators, and achieving real simchas haTorah seemed unattainable. Rabbi Newman explained that what changed all of you from a "fan" to a "player," are **"Five C's"**: **Caring** – to really care to make the gemara your own. When we really care, we find time and energy we never knew existed! **Commitment** – to make a serious commitment to give it your all, in every situation. **Consistency** – making a daily effort towards your goal of "owning" the shakla v'tarya of each and every gemara. **Chazara** – to review again and again, endlessly! **Clarity** – the chazara we do should be

with a focus on the quality of the chazara rather than the quantity, which will bring to a real clarity. In honor of bein hazmanim Rabbi Newman added another **"C"**: Crystalize – to chazer again every sugya that was worked on so hard the past eight months to really crystalize the shakla v'tarya. It is these **"C's"** that change a person from a fan, a spectator, to develop a real Cheshek in learning becoming a real Ben Torah.

The final drasha was from



Rabbi Nossan Newman, who related that in the stormy waters of this world, with the many nisyonos pulling us away from Hashem, we must grab onto our precious gemaras, which the Chafetz Chaim tells us is the eitz chaim, the

tree of life, which the posuk speaks of. The only way for us to hold onto our gemaras with the tenacity required to save us from the strong waves, is with an areivus and ahavas haTorah.

Following bentching, the bochurim joined Beri Weber in a hartzige kumtitz, featuring the new "Kulanu" song recently debuted on the Shir 3 album of Shlomo Yehuda Rechnitz. During the kumtitz, the bochurim listened to a powerful speech from Rabbi Chaim Segal, driving home the importance of making a kabbalah to chazer over bein hazmanim. In the past he has referred to the bochurim of Vhaarev Na as Royalty of Klal Yisrael, Heros of Klal Yisrael, and a Heartbeat of Klal Yisrael. This time he added, "You are Protectors of Klal Yisrael!" As the last notes of the kumtitz faded into the night, the 600 chassanim left Valley Terrace together with their "kallahs," with a renewed appreciation for the importance of chazara, and a kabbalah to use this bein hazmanim to crystalize and solidify what they have learned this past winter.



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