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chazara, chazara,
chazara, and then?
CHAZARA!



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A. About “Vhaarev Na”

1. OUR MISSION

Vhaarev Na is a revolutionary program that was created to help *bochurim* feel a true *mesikus HaTorah*. We aim to eliminate the pressure present in many *yeshivos*, thereby allowing the desire for learning to come from within. Vhaarev Na gives your *talmidim* the tools and encouragement to put in the *mesiras nefesh* that is required to generate a real *ahavas HaTorah*.

2. OUR SUCCESS

From its birthplace in Monsey, the program has spread worldwide with astounding success. *Bochurim* who had said that they could not sit and learn for more than a half-hour straight, can now enjoy a three-hour *retzufos seder*, and are thirsting for more. A *bochur* who previously felt no connection to his *gemara* has now become so attached that he will not go anywhere without it.

B. The Challenge

1. LACK OF CLARITY

Many *yeshivos* find that although their *rebbeim* exude a love for *Torah*, it does not seem to filter down to the *talmidim*. We know that *Torah* is *mesukim m'dvash*, so why do many of our *bochurim* not feel that way too? The answer is that the *gemara* is not clear to them; the *shakla v'tarya* doesn't flow smoothly. As well as their *rebbei* may explain the *gemara* during the *shiur*, it is hard to retain that perfect clarity. Only when *Torah* is clear and understood is it *geshmak*, and the only way to achieve that clarity is through *chazara*, *chazara*, *chazara*, and then... more *chazara*!

2. A VICIOUS CYCLE

The solution may sound very simple, but if they do not love to learn, they will not want to *chazer*. And if they do not *chazer* then there will not be real clarity. If they do not have real clarity, they will not love to learn, and the cycle will continue. We must find a way to break the cycle. We have to help our *bochurim* want to *chazer*. Once they start to *chazer* and taste clarity and success, that feeling of accomplishment and *geshmak* will spur them on further.

3. UNDERSTANDING *TECHILASO MAR*

We must understand, and stress to our *bochurim*, that although *Torah* is sweeter than honey, the delight is not immediately felt, as *Chazal* tell us that *Torah sheba'al peh* is "*techilaso mar*", bitter at first taste. Just as a sweet candy cannot be enjoyed without first removing its wrapper, so too, we have to take the "wrapper" off the *gemara* through *mesiras nefesh* for constant *chazara*. As the Kotzker Rebbe is quoted to have said, "A *segula* to learn with a *cheshek* is to first learn without a *cheshek*." When our *bochurim* will put in effort and toil, they will undoubtedly revel in the *sofo masuk*, the sweet taste of *Torah* acquired through *ameilus*. In the following sections we will discuss the methods *Vhaarev Na* employs to encourage our *bochurim* to put in the *mesiras nefesh* needed to "remove the wrapper".

C. Eliminating Metzuva V'oseh

1. THE DOWNSIDE OF EXTERNAL PRESSURE

When we were younger, we were encouraged to learn well, motivated by *bechinos* and contests. A *bechinah* can be a source of pride or failure, depending on the capabilities of the *bochur*. However, even for a *bochur* who is excelling, it will only reinforce his existing drive, but will not “start the engine” of one who does not have that internal drive to learn. The same is true with incentives based on production. At best, he will do what it takes to receive the prize or reward, but this will not build a passion and love for learning. For boys without that internal drive, tests and contests will create a pressure which may even develop into an aversion to *gemara*.

2. REMOVING EXTERNAL PRESSURE

The central focus of Vhaarev Na is for *bochurim* to learn because they want to, not because they have to. We therefore strongly discourage all external pressure like *bechinos* and production-based incentives. The results seen from *einoh metzuva v'oseh* are far greater in quality and quantity than those seen from *metzuva v'oseh*. In place of external pressure, Vhaarev Na encourages our *bochurim* and helps build an internal drive and passion for learning.

D. Chashivus, Ahava, and Trust

1. CREATING *EINO METZUVA V'OSEH*

Once we remove all external pressures, which tend to drive many *bochurim* away from feeling true *ahavas haTorah*, we can work on the methods needed to create an internal drive. To do this, we need to establish and maintain a foundation of *chashivus*, *ahava*, and trust. These three points are the keys which will encourage our *bochurim* and allow them to invest the effort required to develop a true passion for learning.

2. CHASHIVUS

We have to impress upon our *bochurim* the tremendous *chashivus* of what they are doing. This means constant, daily reminders about the *chashivus* of learning and “owning” a *masechta*. We also must look for ways to point out to our *talmidim* the incredible value of each time they are *moser nefesh* to *chazer a gemara*. While every *blatt* that is learned and *chazered* is precious, even more so is the *mesiras nefesh* that goes into acquiring it. *Mesiras nefesh* and *ameilus haTorah* is something to be celebrated and extolled, for this is how *ahavas haTorah* is developed. *Chashivus* should be conveyed both verbally, by explaining the value of owning a complete *masechta*, and in action, by holding a weekly *kiddush*, celebrating a grand *siyum*, and any other way we can display *chashivus* for our *bochurim* and their learning.

3. AHAVA

When a *bochur* feels that his *rebbe* loves him and cares for him, he is so much more receptive to his *rebbe*'s expectations. We therefore must genuinely feel and look for ways to display our unconditional love for them. We need to show *ahava* for the *bochurim* as a whole, as well as personal *ahava*, to each *bochur* as an individual. When a *bochur* steps out for a moment during *shiur*, the *rebbe* can use his *gemara* and write footnotes for him so that he doesn't miss any *gemara*. When a *bochur* is

sick at home, the *rebbe* can call him, and even send him some hot soup or lunch. Calling a *bochur* aside and taking a genuine interest in his life and wellbeing, goes a very long way. Offering to pay for the *bochurim*'s *gemaras* to be bound, as well as buying or replacing their pencils, are additional ways to show we are there for them. There are so many ways to express to our *talmidim* how much we care for them, we just need to look for ways to do so.

The *rebbe* should specifically seek out excuses to shower his *talmidim* with spontaneous care. When this comes unexpectedly, it is so much more potent than regular, expected rewards. It may mean randomly calling a *bochur* to check up on him, bringing him a snack he enjoys, or any other small gesture of care. These unexpected acts go a long way in developing the *keshar* between *rebbe* and *talmid*, and will serve to fortify the *talmid's* commitment to his *rebbe's* expectations.

4. TRUST

We need to show our *bochurim* that we trust them implicitly. We do this particularly by discontinuing *bechinot* and production-based prizes, showing them that we trust that they will learn well without the pressure of tests and contests. Instead, we give them rewards that are not dependent on their achievement, trusting that they are putting in the effort without working for a prize. Additionally, we don't pressure our *bochurim* that they *have* to learn, trusting instead that they will realize the value of learning and *chazering* on their own.

Trust comes along with responsibility. They must know that only with *mesirus nefesh* on their part will they succeed in feeling a deep love of *Torah*. We can help ease the journey, but it is ultimately up to them to take responsibility for themselves and step up to the challenge. When we balance the love and trust together with a clear vision of what they are expected to do, they will live up to those expectations and ultimately taste the sweet result of their efforts.

5. WEEKLY KIDDUSH

Every Thursday, we hold a “*kiddush*” for our *bochurim*, to celebrate another week of *shteiging*. This is solely to show our *bochurim* the *chashivus* of what they are doing, and another way to show *ahava* for them as a whole and personal *ahava* as well. At the end of the *kiddush*, for “dessert”, the *bochurim* are prompted to make *kabbalos* to *chazer* over Shabbos. The *kabbala* should be whatever each *bochur* is comfortable doing, without any pressure from the *rebbe*. It is very important not to “connect the dots” and tell them that the *kiddush* is so that they will make these *kabbalos*. Simply showing them *ahava* and *chashivus* will lead them to pledge on their own.

E. Method of Learning

1. CHOOSING THE *LIMUD*

Vhaarev Na is designed to bring about *mesikus haTorah* through enhancing the *bekius limud*. Therefore, rather than learn another *perek* in the *masechta* being taught in the morning, we focus on a smaller *masechta*, and complete it cover-to-cover. The tremendous feeling of accomplishment that comes from having a complete *masechta* in your pocket is incomparably greater than that of knowing some thirty or forty *blatt* in a long *masechta*. An added benefit is that it helps with consistency, as they realize that missing a day or slouching off for a bit will result in that much missing from their complete *masechta*. This motivates the *bochurim* to put in their all for every *shiur*, use their spare time to “fill in gaps”, and even to call in for *shiur* from their sickbeds so as not to miss anything from their complete *masechta*.

The *masechtos* that we learn, and have seen tremendous *hatzlacha* in, are *Sukkah*, *Taanis*, and *Sotah*. As the first *perek* that the *bochurim* learn will become the gold standard for all those that follow, we choose to begin with a smaller, easier *perek* rather than start from the beginning of the *masechta*. In *Sukkah* and *Taanis*, we start with the second *perek*, and in *Sotah* from the seventh *perek*.

2. DELIVERING THE *SHIUR*

The *shiur* must be delivered with exacting clarity, slowly translating and accounting for each word. It is advisable to outline the structure of each new *gemara* before learning it inside; when the *bochurim* know what to expect, it is much easier to follow. When reading the *gemara*, detail each step of the *gemara* as the *shakla v'tarya* progresses. We don't necessarily learn every *Rashi* inside, instead weaving *Rashi's* words into the translation of the *gemara*. The *Rashis* or *Tosafos* that we do learn inside must be taught in such a way that each and every word is accounted for and explained.

3. *SHIUR* PACE

There is no specific pace as to how much ground should be covered in a *shiur*; some *sugyos* will go quicker, while harder ones will go a bit slower. The goal is not to finish; the goal is to master. However long it takes for the *bochurim* to attain a crystal-clear understanding of the *gemara*, that's how much time should be spent on it.

4. ENCOURAGING WRITING

It is imperative that during the *shiur*, the *bochurim* write translations and footnotes, as well as anything needed to help them attain a complete understanding and clarity. We use footnotes to fill in whatever is necessary to make the words of the *gemara* flow, and in a sense they are writing their own “*Rashi*”. In this way, they are making the *gemara* “*chazerable*” – when they return to their *gemara* to *chazer*, they will find all the translations and explanations mentioned in *shiur*. As the *rebbe* prepares the *shiur*, he should make mental notes of where there might be use for punctuation, a translation, or footnote. During the *shiur* he would then pause and say, “I would put a footnote here and write...”. The *bochurim* should be strongly encouraged to keep to this method, as only through this will they be able to *chazer* the *gemara* effectively.

F. Chazara

1. THREE PLUS ONE

After the *shiur*, the *bochurim* are expected to *chazer* “three plus one” times before the next *shiur*. That means three times from the *gemara* which they used during *shiur*, with the footnotes and translations, and the fourth time from another “blank” *gemara*. This helps them really internalize what they have learned without the aid of their markings. After they have *chazered* a few times from their own *gemara*, they will be able to *chazer* even with a “blank” *gemara* smoothly, and with ease. It is very important to stress to our *bochurim*, though, that “three plus one” is baseline. In order to really get clarity and ownership of the *sugya*, they need many more *chazaras*.

2. CHAZARA ON THEIR OWN TIME

Rather than provide our *bochurim* with a set time for *chazara*, we leave it up to them to make time in their schedules for *chazara*. By carving out time to devote towards owning a *masechta*, they are truly taking *achrayus* of their own learning. After they are accustomed to finding spare time for their *chazara*, it won’t stop at the ten or fifteen minutes needed to *chazer* that day’s *gemara*. Once they are out of their comfort zones, they will go on to *chazer* at home, and even on a bus, on a plane, or waiting in a doctor’s office.

3. ENCOURAGING CHAZARA

The need for *chazara* cannot be understated. *Chazara* is the number one key that will allow the *gemara* to really become ingrained in the *neshamos* of the *bochurim*. We need to constantly talk about its importance and encourage them over and over to make time for *chazara*. At first they may not understand the strong emphasis on *chazara*, but as they go through the *masechta* they will see that those *blatt* that they *chazered* more are so much more a part of them. However, even as they come to realize its benefits, daily *chizuk* is still necessary. It is

vital to begin each *shiur* by asking the *bachurim* how yesterday's *chazara* went, how many times it was, when, and where it was.

4. SETTING A GOLD STANDARD

During the first few weeks of the year, it is critical to establish a gold standard for the *bochurim* of what it means to truly be *koneh gemara*. We must give them a taste of success so that they will be driven to continue to learn and be *koneh* the future *blatt*. Additionally, these *dafim* will set the tone for the rest of the year and their goal will be to know each and every *daf* like they know the first ones. It is therefore important to spend more time to invest in the complete mastery of these *blatt*. There is an inherent challenge in achieving such a level of success on the first *blatt*, as the *bochurim* have not yet felt the thrill and delight of true *kinyan haTorah*, and will therefore need extra encouragement to *chazer*.

G. Retzufos Sedorim

1. RETZUFOS SEDORIM

Every five or ten *blatt*, or every few weeks, as needed, we hold a *seder* of *retzufos*, where the *bochurim* sit for a few hours and *chazer* all that was learned until that time. These *seedorim* provide a solid review, as well as prove to them that they can sit and enjoy learning for two, three, or even four hours straight. They emerge from the *seder* bursting with genuine *simchah* and glowing with pride from their *hasmadah* and *yedias haTorah*. We engage in a few minutes of *leibidige* dancing to express the *simchah* of having the opportunity to sit and learn for hours on end.

2. ARRANGING THE RETZUFOS SEDER

In order that the *retzufos seder* should come from the *bochurim*, we ask from them when they think they're ready, and how long they should learn. Some might say an hour, some two, and some three or more hours. Compromise between the various suggestions, starting off shorter to start, and getting progressively longer as the year continues. The *bochurim* are charged with arranging the food for the *seudah* at the completion of the *seder*, and one *bochur* is appointed to remove the clock for the duration of the learning. When they are voluntarily organizing their own *retzufos seder*, it becomes considerably more meaningful and effective.

3. THE SEDER

In order to have the *gemaras* flowing off their tongues for three or four hours straight, there has to be much preparation time put in beforehand to *chazer* those *gemaras*. We always say, "You need to *chazer* in order to (be able to) *chazer*" There is a refreshment table for the *bochurim* on the side, but there is absolutely no talking, just continuous *chazara*. The *bochurim* actually accept upon themselves a *taanis dibur* for the duration of the *seder*. They remove their watches, and the learning begins; the only thing that exists in their minds, hearts and *neshamos* is their *gemara* and their *chavrusa*. When the *seder* comes to an end, the *bochurim* break out into lively dancing and then sit down to enjoy the *choshuve seudah* prepared in honor of the occasion.

H. Additional Methods

1. PUSHING BEYOND THEIR LIMITS

We need to show our *bochurim* that what they thought was beyond their abilities, is in fact within reach. Prodding them to do just a bit more than they thought they could accomplish will serve to shatter their perceived lack of ability, awakening them to a new reality. Besides the obvious benefit of the increase in learning, the very realization that they can do more than they thought is very rewarding and motivating. This may include encouraging a simple five-minute *kabbalah* for *chazara* after the *seuda* on a late summer Friday night, or a challenge to memorize all the steps of *shakla v'tarya* of a specific *gemara*. When they see that they can do more than they thought, it will lead them to push themselves even further. Once they are out of their comfort zones, the sky is the limit!

2. POINTING OUT THEIR SHTEIGING

Many times a *bochur* can be growing tremendously in his learning without realizing it himself. Look for opportunities to show your *talmidim* how they have grown since they first started. If a word or concept which was discussed in a previous *gemara* comes up, the *rebbe* can grab this opportunity to challenge the *bochurim* to remember where it was mentioned. When a *bochur* can shoot out the correct answer, recalling a *gemara* from a few *dafim* ago, the genuine *simcha* that he feels tops that of acing any test! Additionally, it will be a clear testimony that *chazara* is what allows us to really internalize the *gemara*, and that their hard work is really bearing fruit.

3. GIVING NACHAS

It is extremely important to call the parents as often as possible to provide *nachas*. Use these calls to comment on the efforts you see the *bochurim* putting in, as well as the *simcha* you are seeing on their faces. Besides bringing such happiness to the parent when they hear about their son's *shteiging*, the pos-

itive messages will filter down to their children, and will fuel them to continue making their parents and *rebbe* proud.

4. HEARING FROM THEIR PEERS

As effective as a *rebbe*'s influence on his *talmidim* is, hearing firsthand from peers is extremely powerful. When *talmidim* who look like them, and talk their language speak about the *mesiras nefesh* Vhaarev Na requires, and the incredible feeling of satisfaction it brings, the message really hits home. Throughout the year, seek out any opportunity to have present and previous participants of Vhaarev Na speak to your *bochurim*. Have these *bochurim* call in over the phone to be *mechazek* your *talmidim*, or invite them to speak at your *siyumim* and *retzufos sedorim*. Their effect is immeasurable.

There is a tremendous benefit to having the *bochurim* enter into a Vhaarev Na *shiur* with the understanding of what Vhaarev Na is. Toward the end of the year, pair up each of your *bochurim* with someone in the grade under them with whom they have a connection, with the purpose being to explain the core message of Vhaarev Na. Although there are *kiddushim* and celebrations, that's not what it's about. It is the *mesiras nefesh* for *chazara* that enables us to reach such a level of *simcha* and satisfaction in our learning. They will then enter the next year with the awareness that although we will be there to make it easier for them with celebrations and encouragement, they have to be prepared to contribute their part – toil and effort in learning and *chazara*.

5. PAIRING CHAVRUSAS

We have seen a tremendous amount of success pairing up some of the stronger boys with weaker ones. They are asked to take *achrayus* for their weaker *chavrusa*. This means that they are charged with ensuring that this *bochur* knows every *gemara* well, *chazering* with him during their spare time. This system builds a sense of empowerment in the stronger *bochur*. It creates accountability on his part, and the weaker *bochur*

benefits greatly as well, with someone on hand to aid him with every *gemara*, making it a win-win situation for everyone.

6. REPORT CARDS

Report cards are commonly used as a way for the *rebbe* to gauge a *bochur*'s success and relay to the boy and his parents how he is doing. With Vhaarev Na, we see the report card as yet another way we can build our *talmidim*. Rather than judging a *bochur* based on his production, we mark them only based on the effort they are investing. The *mesiras nefesh* for *Torah* is all that matters. It is always a good idea to mark a bit above what the *rebbe* really thinks they deserve, which encourages the *bochurim* to live up to that.

Another brilliant way to use the report cards to encourage our *bochurim*, is to have them tell their *rebbe* the mark they think they deserve on their own report cards. The *rebbe* can set a range for each semester, say anywhere from 80-90 for the first semester, and raising the range each semester, as the year progresses. The *bochur* would then be asked to decide what mark he thinks he deserves for each semester (the *rebbe* can add a few points for good measure). When a *bochur* gives himself a 90 for the first semester, his effort in the next semester will reflect that; he is a "90 *bochur*". This system is also another way we can encourage the *bochurim* to take *achrayus* for their own *shteiging* and live up to the role model that is none other than themselves.

I. In Closing

1. LAUNCHING VHAAREV NA

It is crucial that a year of Vhaarev Na be started off right, with the *bochurim* believing in the system from day one and willing to put their hearts into it. We offer the opportunity for any *rebbe* looking to start Vhaarev Na with his *shiur* to come to Monsey for the launching of the program. There we will explain to the *bochurim* how it works and ensure they are on the right track to a successful year of *aliyah*. With the right start and continued *chizuk*, the program will *B'ezras Hashem* be successful in bringing true *mesikus haTorah* to every single *bochur*.

2. IT IS IN THE REBBI'S HANDS

The Vhaarev Na program has proven extremely successful in many *yeshivos*, with boys from all backgrounds. However, it is extremely important to keep in mind that the methods don't work on their own. They can be helpful in allowing the *mesikus haTorah* to develop in *bochurim*, but it is ultimately up to the *rebbe* to create an atmosphere of *chashivus*, warmth and trust so that the *bochurim* will want to put in their full *koach*. This passion needs to be evident in the *rebbe* so that it will ultimately seep into the *bochurim*. The results seen are directly proportionate to the passion and devotion that the *rebbe* invests.



