



Infusing Our Rebbeim with "Fire"

An exclusive interview
with veteran mechanech,
RABBI ZEV REIFMAN

This coming Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Merkaz Kollelim will be celebrating its inaugural, Foundations Dinner at the Tiferes Bais Yaakov Hall. The Guest of Honor at the dinner will be Rav Zev Reifman, Rosh Kollel of the Merkaz's *Kollel L'mechanchim*, along with the other honorees.

Merkaz Kollelim Gevuros Aharon was conceived with the objective to create a vibrant Mokom Torah within Raintree, a place where each and every person is welcome and knows they are welcome, but a place where people understand that the overarching goal is to shteig to grow in Torah.

The objective is achieved through four unique kollelim that run from early morning until late at night, each with its own identity and purpose. One of these is the Kollel L'Mechanchim a Kollel of distinguished Rabbeim from yeshivos and chadorim all over Lakewood who come together to learn and shteig together. In advance of the dinner, the Lakewood Shopper is pleased to feature an exclusive interview with veteran mechanech Rav Zev Reifman shlit"a.

Rabbi Reifman is essentially a Lakewood institution in his own right. From the early Lakewood pioneers, he nurtured hundreds of talmidim, *kein yirbu*, over his approximately thirty-five year chinuch career, becoming one of those most recognizable rebbeim of the Lakewood Cheder. His popularity is enduring as he has taught not just multiple children in a family, but generations of them.

Q. What's the objective of the Mechanchim Kollel?

Rabbi Reifman: The objective of the Mechanchim Kollel is primarily to be *mechazek mechanchim* by giving them an opportunity to learn and *shteig* in a genuine Kollel atmosphere – with all of the *amkus*, the *ameilus*, the *pilpul chaverim*, and the *geshmak* of a regular *beis medrash*. This is what keeps the *rebbeim* "on fire" in their *harbotzas haTorah* – when they have that nonstop "pump" of learning! When this happens, it strengthens their *melamdus* – their skills as a *rebbe*.

Q. Why is it so important for rebbeim to be "on fire"?

Rabbi Reifman: This is the only way to ensure that they will give over Torah to their *talmidim* in the manner that it was given at Har Sinai – with a fire, a *geshmak*, and a *bren!* Otherwise, the boys will get bored, and it will be very hard to discipline them.

Q. What kind of impact does it have on a class when a rebbi has a serious learning seder?

Rabbi Reifman: Many times, there are things that I learn in the afternoon

which I then bring into my classroom. It might be, perhaps, a *sheila* we discussed about a certain topic; I always try to get it into my class. It goes the other way, too; if my *talmidim* in class ask me a good question, I tell them, "I'll ask my *chavrusa* this afternoon." This inspires them; they know their *rebbe* is *araingetubn* in his learning. He's not just coming in to teach and then go on with his life; he's always learning – his whole goal is that there should be constant *limud haTorah* and *shteiging*,

Q. What's the atmosphere like in the Kollel? Does everyone just sit and learn alone? Is there *pilpul chavirim*?

Rabbi Reifman: We have all kinds, most of the *oilam* learns *be'chavrusa*. When you have something that needs clarification, there will be a lot of *pilpul chavirim* – especially since we're learning *sugyos* that are *noge'ah* many areas of *halacha*. When you have a problem with a *Tosafos*, you ask your neighbor. It's a regular *bais medrash* in a big way. It's something that we're very proud of.

Q. Why are you proud? Can you explain that a bit?

Rabbi Reifman: Because it's quite possible for someone to go to a *bais medrash* where he'll sit down and fall asleep, if he just came to learn by himself. This doesn't happen if you have a whole *oilam*, a good crowd learning together. This is what the *Aibishter* wants.

Q. What do you mean when you say that it's what the *Aibishter* wants?

Rabbi Reifman: Let me tell you a story. Yes, it's about me. Thirteen years ago, Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, the *Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva*, was *niftar*.

It was about six weeks before Purim – Purim was like this year, on a Friday. Boruch Hashem, I was *mekayem* the mitzvah of *ad delo yoda* a little bit. Between *Kabolas Shabbos* and *Ma'ariv*, I went up to the *bimah* in my Shul – uninvited – and I said the following short message: I'm going to ask the *oilam* a *Sheila*. *Le'achar mei'ah ve'esrim*, Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, the *Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva*, will come to me and say about this, "Reifman, *dos iz a sheiner sheilah, a gevaldiger sheilah!*" We were learning a *Gemora* in *Gittin*, *Daf Yud Alef Amud Beis*. There's a *machlokes* between Rav Meir and the *Chachomim* about whether a *shtar shichrur* (freedom document) of an *Eved Kenaani* is a *zechus* (beneficial act), and can therefore be granted even if the *Eved* did not appoint a *shaliach*, or is it a *chov* (detrimental act) which cannot take effect without an appointed *shaliach*. The *Chachomim* say that it's a *zechus* for an *Eved Kenaani* to gain his freedom and thereby become a full-fledged *Yisroel*, since he will then become *mechuyav* in *Mitzvos*. Rav Meir disagrees, because the *Eved* loses many things when this happens. If he's the *Eved* of a *Kohen*, he won't be able to eat *Terumah* once he's free; he will no longer have the choice to marry a *shifchah*. So, I asked the following *Sheila*: the very first *Rambam* in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* says that *Noshim* and *Avodim* are *pattur* from *Talmud Torah*. The *Maggid Mishneh* there says that it is *assur* for a *Yisroel* to teach *Torah* to an *Eved*. If so, my question is, how can you say that a *shtar shichrur* is a *chov* – as long as he's an *Eved*, he doesn't have the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*! When he's a *ben chorin*, he does have the mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*!! SO, IF HE REMAINS AN EVED, ER LEBT NISHT – HE'S NOT ALIVE!!!

While you may be able to find a *teirutz* to this, still, *midarf fregen der shaila!* It's a question that should bother us! A person who understands what *Torah* is, *dos iz zein chaim*, will be troubled by this *shaila*. An *Eved Kenaani*, what is he? He works all day – he's *assur* to learn *Torah*! Er lebt? He's alive? He's as good as "dead"! Now, when he becomes a free man, are we going to worry about the *Terumah* he's losing? Or that he can't marry a *shifcha*? But he can learn *Torah*!!

So, when you ask me, what's the impact of learning *Torah* – I can't even believe that's a question. Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, you looked at him, that was his *gantze leben!* This is what we strive for.

Q. Can you please be a bit more specific about what you are striving for, and how you're achieving that goal?

Rabbi Reifman: Our goal is that *Torah* should be an essential part of our life. Living with *Torah*, learning the *Torah*, being *mekayem* the *Torah*, and being *mechazek* *Torah*. That means to be a *tomech* *Torah* – pump *Torah*! Be like the founders of this *Mosad*, who will do anything to be *mechazek* *Torah*. *Divrei Torah* are among the four things that need a constant *chizuk*.

On *Purim*, I mentioned to Mrs. *Toporowitz* what *Rebbeinu Yonah* says on the *pasuk* in *Mishlei*, "*Ish lefi mahalalo* – a man according to his praises". On a *pashuteh* level, it means that you can understand and measure a person from the way people praise him. *Rebbeinu Yonah*, however, says that it can be understood that you can measure the stature of a person by the things that he praises. Look at what it is that he is *machshiv*! If he is *machshiv* something, then even if he is not yet on that *madreigah*, but he encourages it and praises it, he pays for it, and he puts his *kochos* and his life into it – we understand what is truly his *chashivus* in life. This is *emes la'amito*, the *Meyasdim* do everything they can for his *Kollel*, and that is a tremendous *chizuk* for me, for the *mechanchim*, and everyone else who's learning in this *Mercaz* of all the *Kollelim*. It's not just a guy coming in and giving a check, like, "I have a *Kollel*, I'll pay you once a month or whatever". They constantly have a desire, looking to be *mechazek*. They want to make it better, to build a building, to make it 24/7, it's unbelievable!

Q. What sort of impact does *Mercaz Kollelim* have on the neighborhood? Why does every neighborhood need a *Kollel*? Why isn't one big *Yeshiva* good enough?

Rabbi Reifman: When you see *Shloimy* coming into the *Kollel*, putting out the tissue boxes and making sure everyone has whatever they need, it's a *chizuk* for everybody. The whole family is *mechazek* the place. On *Purim* night, there was a special learning seder; on *Chanukah* he made something to make sure everyone learns. It's a tremendous *Kiddush Hashem* – *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* loves this.

Q. What kind of *hakoras hatov* do you think the members of *Merkaz Kollelim* have for the *hanhalla* of *Kollel Merkaz Hatorah*?

Rabbi Reifman: They are helping us learn, they are giving us a full seder, that's what every *Yeshiva mahn* wants. It's very

hard for a *melamed* to put in a full seder. The reason that so many are *boruch Hashem* successful is because of the *Kollel*. There's so much other stuff going on for a *rebbe* – you have papers to mark, parents to speak to, but the *Kollel* sets aside two hours a day that are *kavua* for *limud haTorah*. It's an opportunity that we all appreciate.

Q. Why should someone support *Merkaz Kollelim*?

Rabbi Reifman: When you support *Merkaz Kollelim*, you are feeding the *Aibishter's* children with *ruchniyus dig* nourishment. You're being *mechazek* learning, you're being *mechazek mechanchim*, as well all types of people in the *Kolleim*, *baalei battim* and the like.

Q. Can you end of with a *brocha*?

Rabbi Reifman: My *brocha* is that the founders & supporters of the *Kollel* should continue in *avodas hakodesh*. Besides being a *machzik Torah*, being a *lomeid* and a *melamed Torah*. Have a tremendous *cheishek* and love for *Torah*. They should *shteig* and the *Aibishter* should give them *shefa brocha* in both his *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*. They should be able to continue, *ad bias Moshiach*, in this *gevaldiger tafkid*.

The dinner presents an opportunity for partnership and investment in a unique prototype model of *Harbotzas Torah* that will be"H be replicated in many other areas in *Lakewood* and be"H in *kehillos* throughout the world. For more formation or to participated in the dinner journal please call Rabbi Shimmy Stregosky at 646.395.7013 or visit www.merkazkga.com.