

# Discovering YOUR CHELEK IN TORAH

MERKAZ KOLLELIM OF RAINTREE

KOLLEL BOKER • BREAKFAST-N-LEARN •  
*Merkaz*

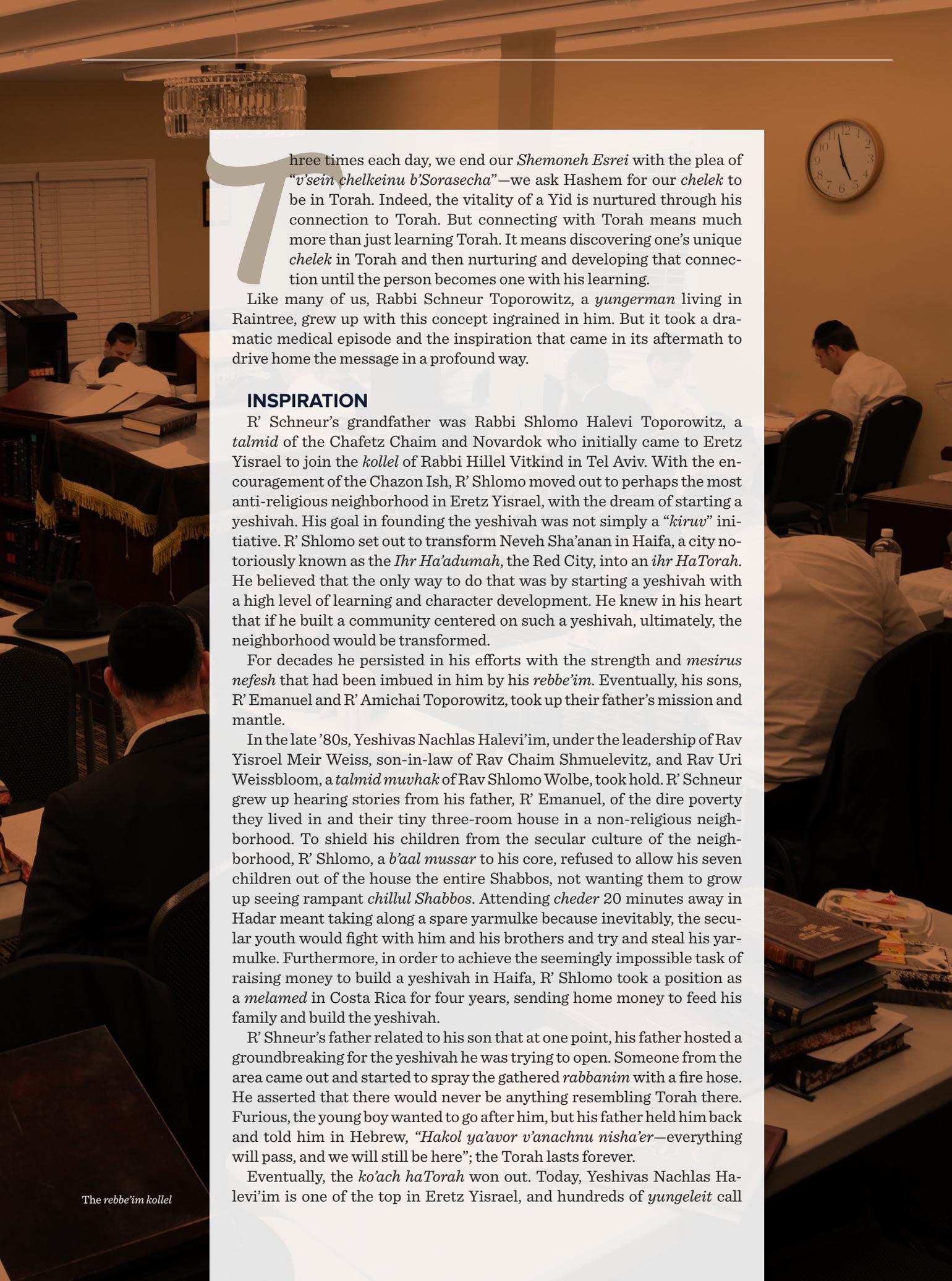
מרכז כוללים  
גבורות אהרן  
ריינטרי

KOLLELIM OF RAINTREE

ROUND-THE-CLOCK  
LIMUD HATORAH

KOLLEL EREV • KOLLEL MECHANIM KOLLEL • FULL DAY KOLLEL



A photograph of a yeshiva classroom. In the foreground, the back of a student's head and shoulders is visible as they sit at a desk. In the middle ground, a teacher in a white shirt stands at a podium, facing a class of students seated at desks. The room is dimly lit, with a large chandelier hanging from the ceiling and a round clock on the wall. The overall atmosphere is quiet and focused.

Three times each day, we end our *Shemoneh Esrei* with the plea of “*v’sein chelkeinu b’Sorasecha*”—we ask Hashem for our *chelek* to be in Torah. Indeed, the vitality of a Yid is nurtured through his connection to Torah. But connecting with Torah means much more than just learning Torah. It means discovering one’s unique *chelek* in Torah and then nurturing and developing that connection until the person becomes one with his learning.

Like many of us, Rabbi Schneur Toporowitz, a *yungerman* living in Raintree, grew up with this concept ingrained in him. But it took a dramatic medical episode and the inspiration that came in its aftermath to drive home the message in a profound way.

### INSPIRATION

R’ Schneur’s grandfather was Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Toporowitz, a *talmid* of the Chafetz Chaim and Novardok who initially came to Eretz Yisrael to join the *kollel* of Rabbi Hillel Vitkind in Tel Aviv. With the encouragement of the Chazon Ish, R’ Shlomo moved out to perhaps the most anti-religious neighborhood in Eretz Yisrael, with the dream of starting a yeshiva. His goal in founding the yeshiva was not simply a “*kiruv*” initiative. R’ Shlomo set out to transform Neveh Sha’anani in Haifa, a city notoriously known as the *Ihr Ha’adumah*, the Red City, into an *ihr HaTorah*. He believed that the only way to do that was by starting a yeshiva with a high level of learning and character development. He knew in his heart that if he built a community centered on such a yeshiva, ultimately, the neighborhood would be transformed.

For decades he persisted in his efforts with the strength and *mesirus nefesh* that had been imbued in him by his *rebbe’im*. Eventually, his sons, R’ Emanuel and R’ Amichai Toporowitz, took up their father’s mission and mantle.

In the late ’80s, Yeshivas Nachlas Halevi’im, under the leadership of Rav Yisroel Meir Weiss, son-in-law of Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, and Rav Uri Weissbloom, a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Shlomo Wolbe, took hold. R’ Schneur grew up hearing stories from his father, R’ Emanuel, of the dire poverty they lived in and their tiny three-room house in a non-religious neighborhood. To shield his children from the secular culture of the neighborhood, R’ Shlomo, a *b’aal mussar* to his core, refused to allow his seven children out of the house the entire Shabbos, not wanting them to grow up seeing rampant *chillul Shabbos*. Attending *cheder* 20 minutes away in Hadar meant taking along a spare yarmulke because inevitably, the secular youth would fight with him and his brothers and try and steal his yarmulke. Furthermore, in order to achieve the seemingly impossible task of raising money to build a yeshiva in Haifa, R’ Shlomo took a position as a *melamed* in Costa Rica for four years, sending home money to feed his family and build the yeshiva.

R’ Shneur’s father related to his son that at one point, his father hosted a groundbreaking for the yeshiva he was trying to open. Someone from the area came out and started to spray the gathered *rabbanim* with a fire hose. He asserted that there would never be anything resembling Torah there. Furious, the young boy wanted to go after him, but his father held him back and told him in Hebrew, “*Hakol ya’avov v’anachnu nisha’er*—everything will pass, and we will still be here”; the Torah lasts forever.

Eventually, the *ko’ach haTorah* won out. Today, Yeshivas Nachlas Halevi’im is one of the top in Eretz Yisrael, and hundreds of *yungeleit* call

*The key to sustaining Klal Yisrael is ensuring that this ko'ach haTorah remains the centerpiece of each neighborhood*

Neveh Sha'an'an home. And the home of the man who had sprayed the *rabbanim* was purchased to serve as a dormitory for the yeshivah.

When the *beis midrash* expanded, an elderly Rav Shach *zt"l* came to speak. Emotionally, he recounted how the yeshivah was a testament to the *bitachon* of R' Shlomo and his *emunah* in the *ko'ach haTorah*. But more than that, Rav Shach related, the story of the yeshivah in Haifa should serve as an inspiration for us—we must recognize what Torah can do for us!

**INSPIRED BY THE GADOL HADOR**

In his mid-20s, R' Schneur suffered an extremely rare spinal illness and was temporarily paralyzed. The doctors were unable to figure out a course of treatment, and Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman was approached for advice. He said to tell R' Schneur that he would recover and be fine, however, he needed to strengthen his *kibbud av*.

When one of the irreligious doctors treating R' Schneur heard this,

he scoffed and said, “How can an old man halfway across the world know this?” Several weeks later, R' Schneur was walking around. The doctor was forced to admit that he was wrong.

When he left the hospital, R' Schneur knew that he had to do something. But what?

**TRIP TO ERETZ YISRAEL**

Several years after leaving the hospital, R' Schneur visited Eretz Yisrael. The *gadol hador* Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman had recently passed away, and R' Schneur went on a tour of *kollelim* across Eretz Yisrael that had been under his auspices. He observed firsthand how the centenarian *gadol hador* had tirelessly taken on more and more staggering financial commitments, raising countless millions of dollars to build and expand the society of *bnei Torah* in Eretz Yisrael.

On the plane ride back to the States, R' Schneur contemplated what he had seen and the stories he had grown up with, and he began to realize something: It was not *kiruv*, nor was it speeches, that had started and fueled the revolution in Haifa. It was simply Torah—pure *limud haTorah* which resulted in the transformation of a neighborhood in Eretz Yisrael from a bastion of secularism to a bastion of Torah.

The key to sustaining Klal Yisrael is ensuring that this *ko'ach haTorah* remains the centerpiece of each neighborhood. That was what

the *Gadol Hador* was *moser nefesh* to ensure.

*Learn it b'iyun!*

When the night *kollel* first began, R' Schneur sat down with Rabbi Yisroel Meir Weiss *shlit"a* and Rabbi Uri Weisbloom *shlit"a*. Among the many questions he had for them was whether the learning should be at a relatively quick pace or more *b'iyun*.

Considering that one of the *rabbanim* is a *rosh yeshivah* and scion of Mir, and the other is a *ba'al mussar* and *talmid* of Rav Wolbe *zt"l*, he expected different answers. To his surprise, they both told him the same thing: “You are starting with a smaller *masechta*, *Megillah*. Learn it *b'iyun*. Show each person attending what he can accomplish, that he can learn a *masechta* from cover to cover *b'iyun*.”

A little more than a year later, the night *kollel* is close to finishing the entire *masechta b'iyun*.

Rabbi Mordechai Dombroff, *s'gan rosh hamosad*, speaking at a *kollel* event. Seated left to right are, Rabbi Raphoel Yehuda Frankel, *rosh kollel erev*; Rabbi Yossi Retter, *rosh kollel seder sheini*; Rabbi Zev Reifman, *rosh kollel l'mechanchim*; and Rabbi Yudie Teichman, *rosh kollel seder rishon*.





The full-day kollel

## IMPLEMENTING THE IDEAL

Lakewood is a diverse *kehillah*, home to thousands of *bonei Torah* who spend years in kollel. It is home to the largest yeshivah in the world, with over 7,000 *talmidim* and *chaburos* covering virtually every area of Torah. The dynamic learning of Lakewood draws thousands of young men each year to begin their married lives here, learning and growing in Torah.

Yet, while our generation has been blessed with many resources to help those outside the *koslei beis midrash* maintain regular learning *sedarim*, for many people, the concept of an absorbing *sefer limud* in which one gets “into it” ends with their taking leave of the *koslei hayeshivah*.

This fed R’ Schneur’s motivation to create a unique *mosad*, Merkaz Kollelim Gevuros Ahron, an array of kollelim that run from early morning until late at night.

Individually, each of these kollelim is separate from the others, but collectively, they form an infrastructure whereby each member of the community has a place geared toward ensuring that *limud haTorah* is available to him, no matter what the current circumstances of his life are.

It took several years. But the vision is becoming a reality—and exceeding all expectations.

## KOLLEL BOKER

Each day before Shachris, a mix of *balebattim* and *avreichim* make their way to the kollel for an immersing *sefer* before Shacharis.

After Shacharis, the paths of those sitting and learning together will diverge. Some will go to work and some will go to *sefer*. However, during this *sefer* and *davening* they are all united in ensuring that the day begins with Torah.

*Eventually, the ko’ach  
haTorah won out.  
Today, Yeshivas  
Nachlas Halevi im is  
one of the top in Eretz  
Yisrael, and hundreds  
of yungeleit call Neveh  
Sha’anun home*

Outside the *beis midrash*, children wait for buses to pick them up. As Shacharis ends, they see their fathers leaving the shul together with their *chavrusos*, and the message of *chashivus haTorah* is delivered without words.

Torah study unites us all and sets the tone for how we live the rest of the day.

## FULL-DAY KOLLEL

Under the leadership of the *ro-*

*shei kollel*, Rabbi Yehuda Teichman and Rabbi Yossi Retter, a group of young *avreichim* carry over the dynamic *yegias haTorah* of their best yeshivah years to form a nucleus of aspiring *talmidei chachamim*. Here, in the nurturing environment of the kollel, the *yungeleit* are able to develop their personal aspirations and broaden their ambitions to grow.

Rabbi Teichman and Rabbi Retter interact with each of the *avreichim*, forming a personal *keshar* with them and ensuring that they are able to reach their full potential.

The week ends off with an in-depth Chumash *shiur* given each Friday by Rabbi Teichman or Rabbi Schneur Toporowitz.

## MECHANCHIM KOLLEL

Perhaps the crown jewel of the Merkaz’s initiatives is the *mechanchim kollel*. Every afternoon, after a strenuous day of *chinuch* and *harbatzas haTorah*, this select group, featuring some of Lakewood’s most senior *mechanchim*, comes together for an afternoon of intense *limud HaTorah*. Under the auspices of the esteemed *rosh kollel*, Rabbi Zev Reifman, a veteran *mechanech* himself, these *rebbe'im*, each of them a distinguished *talmid chacham* in his own right, apply themselves to the *sugyos* with dynamic vigor and *hasmadah*.

## KOLLEL EREV

The night kollel at the Merkaz is

led by Rabbi Raphoel Yehuda Frankel and features a broad mix of *bnei Torah*, ranging from *balebattim* in the workforce to *kollel yungeleit* and everything in between. Detailed *marei mekomos* set the pace of the learning, and regular *chaburos* are given on every *sugya* by Rabbi Schneur Toporowitz and Rabbi Dovid Yaakov Geller. Night *seder* may be the final *seder* of the day, but it serves as a capstone instilling the message delivered in the *beis midrash* throughout the day.

**COLLABORATIVE EFFECT**

Under the leadership of the *rosh hamosad*, Rabbi Toporowitz, and the *s'gan*, Rabbi Mordechai Dombroff, these four separate *kollelim* come together to form a vibrant Torah center with a place for every demographic of the community to *shteig* in Torah, taking the dynamic learning found in the halls of *yeshiva* and implanting it in the neighborhood of Raintree.

Torah was given to all of us and must be available to all of us, and intrinsic to the *ko'ach* of Torah is its unique ability to unite a diverse spectrum of *lomdim* into a cohesive and focused *chaburah* with the fulfilling sense of achievement that comes from true *ameilus b'Torah*.

**FOUNDATIONS DINNER**

On Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Nisan, March 14, the *kollelim* will be celebrating their inaugural Foundations Dinner at the Tiferes Bais Yaakov Hall. Naturally, the honorees at the inaugural dinner will be the *roshei kollel*, who stand at the helm of the Merkaz. Accepting the award on behalf of the *kollel erev* will be Rabbi Eli Litvintchouk, the *Amud HaTorah* awardee. Special *divrei bracha* will be delivered by Rabbi Yaakov Schnaidman, Rosh Yeshivas Bais Moshe of Scranton.

Out of an overriding sense of *hakarass hatov*, the members of the different *kollelim*—*yungeleit*, *rebbeim*,

and *balebattim*—are reaching out to friends and family to join them in this tribute to their respective *roshei kollel*.

The dinner presents an opportunity for partnership and investment in a unique prototype model of *harbatzas haTorah* which will *b'ezras Hashem* be replicated in many other areas in Lakewood and in *kehillos* throughout the world.

*Raw Aharon Leib Shteinman said to tell R Schneur that he would recover and be fine, however, he needed to strengthen his kibbud av*

*Zilmod U'lelamed*

While teaching Torah is the ultimate goal in the *masores haTorah*, unfortunately for many *mechanchim*, the loss of a proper infrastructure results in a stagnation in their own *chelek* in Torah.

The invigorating energy provided by the *mechanchim kollel* was beautifully articulated in the words of one of the participants: “As a longtime *mechanech*, I know the *mesirus nefesh* that it takes to sit down for an intense *seder* with a *chavrusa* for several hours, after a full day in the classroom. I must say, I am awed by the *hasmadah* and the *bren* that my fellow *rebbe'im* bring to the *kollel* every day. It is a humbling *zechus* to be part of an elite *chaburah* that maintains such a passion.”



The night kollel