

LEARNING NEVER ENDS AT CAMP ROMIMU...

It was the spring of 2020, in middle of the New York City Covid lockdown, and Rabbi Shlomo Pfeiffer, director and owner of Camp Romimu, was driving home from visiting his mother on the Lower East Side. She was all alone and isolated during the pandemic. As he made his way back to Far Rockaway, Rabbi Pfeiffer began to reflect on the many calls he had been getting from campers' parents describing the isolation of the boys stuck at home from *yeshiva*. Both young and old were in isolation. He visited his mother, but what could he do to help the many boys who were away from their *yeshiva* and their friends? It was then and there that he decided that something had to be done to give a chance for the boys to connect through learning. Torah@Twilight was born. Boys would log into a nightly interactive Zoom *shiur* in *halacha* and have a *geshmak* in learning.

Before Covid, Rabbi Pfeiffer ran a Likras Shabbos program year-round. It was an outgrowth of the Likras Shabbos–Erev Shabbos learning program in Camp Romimu. Boys could learn on Erev Shabbos wherever they were in their own *shuls* and then record their participation throughout the year. The boys who learned would be eligible for weekly gift cards, as well as a special barbecue, canteen treats, and raffle prizes and rewards when they came to camp. Rabbi Pfeiffer also gave a well-attended weekly *shiur* to boys in his *shul* in Far Rockaway. The concept was very popular and boys from all over were learning on Erev Shabbos and earning prizes.

And then Covid hit....

Shuls were closed, *yeshivos* were shuttered, and everyone was “stuck at home.” What was going to be with all the great Torah learning? Rabbi Pfeiffer decided to move his weekly Likras Shabbos *shiur* to Zoom. Many boys joined right away from all over New York, Lakewood, Baltimore, Miami, Chicago, Toronto, and Montreal, whether they were campers of Camp Romimu or not. The *shiur* grew each week and Rabbi Pfeiffer continued his *shiur* and arranged special guest speakers as well.

Mordechai Klein from Baltimore was a steady Likras Shabbos learner in his *shul*. When he couldn't attend anymore, he started Zooming with Rabbi Pfeiffer. “It was great seeing old camp friends on Zoom,” he remarked. “Others I met live in person during the summer. It was great.”

Was learning once a week enough? Although boys were Zooming and calling in to their *yeshiva shiurim*, they were cooped up in their houses all day and night. Rabbi Pfeiffer decided to expand his Likras Shabbos *shiur* to a nightly *shiur*. Hence the formation of Torah@Twilight. Torah@Twilight is a daily *shiur* based on *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*. Each evening has a special interesting *halachic* topic, such as:

Magic in *halacha*.

Can you use your friend's *shtender* in *shul* without asking him?

If a *Yated* arrives via US mail to your house on Shabbos, are you allowed to read it?

Special guests joined and added their expertise for certain topics, such as how to check for *shatnez*.

Boys Zoomed for 15 to 20 minutes with a captivating *shiur* and the opportunity to earn prizes. Parents were so grateful and the thank you notes poured in. “We just wanted to say thank you for such a wonderful evening program,” one parent wrote. “Our son is really enjoying it! You must be doing an amazing job,

because he's very willing to come - even after a very long day of Zoom school.”

Shuls opened and boys went back to *yeshiva*, but Torah@Twilight became a new *kvius*. Neither Rabbi Pfeiffer nor the participants wanted it to stop. And so, it continued! After the summer of 2020, a new season of *shiurim* with another round of intriguing questions began:

May one walk across a street on Shabbos and cause a non-*frum* *Yid* to stop his car?

If a *koton* misses *Havdalah* on a late *Mot-zoei Shabbos*, do we say *Havdalah* for him on Sunday morning?

I cut my finger. Am I permitted to put my finger in my mouth or is there a problem of eating blood?

A new challenge arose. As New York State began to ease the Covid restrictions, there were now weddings, *simchos*, and other conflicts. Rabbi Pfeiffer and the boys stayed com-



mitted. Rabbi Pfeiffer recounted how, during weddings, he would walk out and say the *shiur* from his car. One time, he was travelling and his flight was delayed. Right after he landed, he said the *shiur* from the JFK Airport baggage claim. Rabbi Pfeiffer noted, “The boys realized that when you learn a little bit every day, you can actually accomplish so much.”

Mordechai Klein commented, “Even though I am busy, when Torah@Twilight time arrived, I dropped everything to learn.”

Another aspect added to the new program was a point club system, where the participants could not only earn through the daily raffles, but could also earn special prizes and privileges when they come to Camp Romimu. Prizes ranged from special barbecue nights, go-karting, water skiing lessons, and an exciting trip. Boys were very motivated to earn the points, with over 100 campers reaching the highest levels. To earn these prizes, boys would have to log in between 40 and 80 nights over the season. Dovid Bloch of Lakewood remarked that he received a postcard and tried it out. “It was fun!” He ended up logging in for 94 nights. Dovid introduced other boys to the *shiur* and they all became “learner-earners.”

When camp began this past summer, the Torah@Twilight learners were presented with their “rewards cards.” They walked around camp with a certain sense of accomplishment and pride knowing that they kept their extra *seder* outside of their regular *yeshiva* learning.

Torah@Twilight started again this season two weeks after camp ended. There are many boys participating. Some are Romimu campers and others are boys who just want extra learning. The learning begins nightly at 9 p.m., and 5 p.m. on Erev Shabbos. Boys from all over in grades 6 and up are invited to participate by going to romimu.com/zoom.

Learning groups end during the summer with an announcement, “Although learning never ends in Camp Romimu, activities begin right now.” *Boruch Hashem*, learning never ends...

AGRA D'PIRKA'S ROSH HASHANAH INSPIRATION BY FLATBUSH RABBONIM

BY RABBI CHAIM FUHRER

Yomim Noraim are days when *Klal Yisroel* engages in introspection and seeks spiritual growth. On Sunday, September 5, Agra D'Pirka sponsored a special pre-Rosh Hashanah program at Knesses Bais Avigdor in Flatbush, featuring three renowned *rabbonim* who spoke to an audience of 500, including live and online attendees.

The first speaker was Rav Avrohom Schorr, who discussed what Rabbeinu Yonah calls the “*mitzvah kolleles*” of *uvocharto bachaim* — the directive to choose life. All other *mitzvos* represent a means toward achieving that goal.

When we implore Hashem to give us life, we say *lemaancha Elokim Chayim*. This means we must choose the manner of life which Hashem wants us to have — a life of *ruchniyus*. Rav Schorr pointed out that the *gematria* of *shofar* is 586. By adding the 100 *kolos* we are required to hear, the total is 686 — the *gematria* of “*uvocharto bachaim*.”

The second speaker was Rav Lipa Geldwerth of Kol Torah, who repeated *divrei hisorerus* given by Rav Naftoli Tropp in Radin. Rav Naftoli explained that when we say in *selichos*, “*K'dalim ucheroshim dofaknu delosecho*” — we are like needy, impoverished beggars banging on Your door — we must envision ourselves that way. We have nothing and are entitled to nothing. Our possessions, families, health, and our very lives are on the line every Rosh Hashanah. This past year, with Covid and numerous other tragedies, this message was delivered very clearly.

Rav Aharon Kahn of Knesses Bais Avigdor completed the program with an analysis regarding the custom of not sleeping on Rosh Hashanah. The earli-

est source for this custom is in the writings of the Mahari Ibn Shauib, a *talmid* of the *Rashba*, who suggests that the reason for this custom is that the very thought one is undergoing a judicial process in which his life hangs in the balance should not allow one to sleep. As the captain of the ship said to Yonah, “*Mah lecha nirdam*” — how can you sleep when we are about to go under?

The *Darkei Moshe* (*siman* 583) quotes the words of the *Yerushalmi*: “One who sleeps on Rosh Hashanah, his *mazal* will sleep.” The *Rema* cites this as the source for this tradition, adding that the custom is commendable. However, from the words of the Mahari Ibn Shauib, it is clear that it is not merely a commendable custom, but the essence of what Rosh Hashanah is about. As the *Rambam* portrays the message of the *shofar*: “Awaken from your sleep and emerge from your slumber!”

The Erev Rosh Hashanah event was one of many programs sponsored by Agra D'Pirka before *yomim tovim* as well as on legal holidays. There are also daily *shiurim* in Baltimore, Boca Raton, Boro Park, Flatbush, Kew Gardens Hills, Lakewood, Miami Beach, Monsey, West Palm Beach, and Williamsburg. Several new Agra D'Pirka branches are being planned for the year 5782.

For further information regarding schedules of *shiurim* or branch locations, visit www.agradpirka.org, email cfuhrer@agradpirka.org, or call 212-661-9400.



Rav Aharon Kahn speaking at the Yomim Noraim program.



Rav Lipa Geldwerth speaking at the Yomim Noraim program.