

## Memorable *Shiurim* Featured at Agra D'Pirka's Memorial Day Program



Harav Aharon Kahn (L) and Harav Zev Smith at the Memorial Day Agra D'Pirka *shiur*.

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Are you *yotzei* the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah* when you say *Tehillim*? How do you give *tzedakah* and do *chessed* with a totally new perspective? And what's the special *koach* of each of the holy cities in Eretz Yisrael?

These and other fascinating issues were explored during the recent Agra D'Pirka legal holiday *shiurim* on Memorial Day. The lecture series, which was held at four different Agra D'Pirka locations, drew large crowds, and not just because it was a beautiful day in early summer; but because members of *Klal Yisrael* are eager and willing to spend their leisure time and legal holiday vacations in the pursuit of Torah learning.

In Flatbush, Harav Aharon Kahn opened the program with a fascinating *shiur* on whether *Tehillim* can be considered *Talmud Torah*. "The topic of today's *shiur*," said Rav Kahn, "has an element of *halachah l'maaseh*. When a person is saying *Tehillim*, whether in *davening* itself or for a *choleh*, or when reciting *Tehillim* daily, is he being *mekayem mitzvas Talmud Torah*?"

"One thing is clear," said Rav Kahn. "You're taking a *passuk* of Torah and using it in a different context. You're not saying it for the purpose of *Talmud Torah*. But are we coincidentally being *mekayem* this *mitzvah*?"

Rav Kahn spoke about the time-

less essence of *Tehillim*. "Every *dor*," he said, "has the capacity to say *Tehillim*. It speaks for us. It's our language and our circumstances, and that's incredible."

But despite its inherent beauty, Dovid Hamelech did not want *Tehillim* to be considered as if it were a treasury of poems. He wanted *Tehillim* to be read, to be analyzed and discussed and to be *darshened*. "It's not just nice words."

Dovid Hamelech wrote *sefer Tehillim* as he cried out to Hashem during his own personal difficulties. But he also wanted it to be relevant and engaging for future generations. According to Rav Kahn, Dovid Hamelech wanted *Tehillim* to accomplish three things: "First, that it should not be treated as poetry. Second, that one could analyze the depth of each word. And third, that it comes with the *s'char* of *limud haTorah*."

Rav Kahn's *shiur* serves as an introduction to his series of *shiurim* on *Tehillim* which will take place every Wednesday at Agra D'Pirka's Flatbush location. It provided fascinating insight into a topic that has tremendous depth.

Harav Zev Smith spoke next, providing a refreshing perspective on whether we live to give or give to live. He said giving *tzedakah* and acts of *chessed* don't always come easily to us. "How do we internalize this great objective," asked Rav Smith, "which is actually the essence of life? If not

for giving, what is life all about?"

Rav Smith told the well-known story of Rabbi Akiva's daughter, whose life was saved on her wedding day because of the *chessed* that she performed. "We think we live to give," he said, "but in reality we give to live."

So in essence, the *ani* is there for our own benefit. "When the *Ribbono shel Olam* sees that a Yid has a need," Rav Smith explains, "he sends him a gift. What's the gift? An *ani*. It's as if Hashem is saying, 'Reb Yid, you need a *yeshuah*; I'm sending you a *yeshuah*, I'm sending you an *ani*. If you help him and provide his needs, I will send you a *yeshuah*.'"

The *ani*, explained Rav Smith, is our ticket to *Olam Haba*. He is servicing us. We have to have the attitude of "We live by doing *chessed* for another Yid. He's there for us."

Finally, Harav Daniel Glatstein spoke about *kedushas Eretz Yisrael*, focusing on the special *kochos* of each city that correspond to a specific *mitzvah*. In a riveting *shiur*, he discussed the cities of Yerushalayim, Chevron, Beis Lechem, Tzfas, Kiryas Sefer, and even Gaza, analyzing how each one has its own unique powers both in Biblical and contemporary times.

"Eretz Yisrael," said Rav Glatstein, "is different than any other place in the world. It's inextricably bound with the Torah. Every city is connected with a part of the Torah. Master

that Torah and that area will fall to you."

For example, the special *mitzvah* of Yerushalayim is Shabbos. *Lechah Dodi*, Rav Glatstein pointed out, is full of references to Shabbos. The *shiur* offered a unique outlook on how contemporary issues can be traced back in history to the times of *Tanach*.

Agra D'Pirka legal holiday programs were held not just in Flatbush but also in Miami Beach, in Lakewood, and in Queens. Agra D'Pirka founder Reb Ezra Klein estimates that about a thousand people participated in the legal holiday program, either in person, via TorahAnytime, or on the phone.

The legal holiday special program serves as a special treat for those who regularly attend Agra D'Pirka. It is also a rich resource for those who are not yet full-fledged members of the Agra D'Pirka family. It allows these individuals to enjoy the program and to taste the sweet sensation of Agra D'Pirka, even on a limited basis. For all those who participated, it was certainly a most memorable Memorial Day.

*Agra D'Pirka is a morning Torah learning program for professionals, business people, students, retirees, and anyone interested in serious limud haTorah. For more information about Agra D'Pirka, please call 212-661-9400 or visit [agradpirka.org](http://agradpirka.org).*