

Agra D'Pirka Special Programs Highlight Chanukah Shiurim

BY MALKIE LOWINGER

For some, a legal holiday means a vacation. For Agra D'Pirka, it represents an opportunity.

Agra D'Pirka, the morning *kollel* program that is sweeping the nation, took advantage of last week's legal holiday by offering special programs to prepare *Klal Yisroel* for *Chanukah*. Hundreds of participants eager to hear *chizuk* and *halacha* about *Chanukah* attended the programs in Brooklyn, Lakewood, and Jackson, and others joined remotely.

Rav Zev Smith opened the program in Brooklyn, speaking on the topic of Building Worlds with Words. He quoted a *Gemara* in *Bava Basra* which indicates that one who speaks caringly to another person receives 11 *brachos*. Words give life, Rav Smith noted, and a compliment can invigorate a person and give *chiyus*, with the resulting warm feelings lasting for years.

Rav Smith said he once sent parents of a student a letter of appreciation for a *Chanukah* gift. They told him that six months later, they still cherished his letter and reviewed it weekly. He advised that we make it a habit to compliment our *rabbeim*, spouses, children, employees, neighbors, and everyone we interact with. He also suggested that during *Chanukah*, everyone should attempt to give

at least one compliment daily.

Rav Noach Isaac Oelbaum spoke next about the Essence of *Chanukah*. He began by citing the importance of learning Torah in anticipation of a *chag*. Agra D'Pirka, he said, provides the perfect venue for this.

Rav Oelbaum discussed the preferred way to light the *menorah* and how to perform the *mitzvah b'hiddur*. He pointed out that the *Chanukah lecht* can only light up the world if there's a match to ignite them. So too, he said, performing a *mitzvah* is wonderful — but Torah is the match that ignites the *mitzvah* and elevates it to a higher level.

Rav Aharon Kahn offered an interpretation of the *kapitel of Tehillim*, “*Mizmor Shir Chanukahs Habyis L'Dovid*.” If Shlomo Hamelech built the *Beis Hamikdosh*, asked Rav Kahn, what was Dovid Hamelech referring to? Most *meforshim* explain that Dovid wrote this *kapitel b'nevuah*.

Rav Kahn explained that according to the *midrash*, the *Beis Hamikdosh* would never have been destroyed if Dovid had built it. Thus, its destruction was ultimately for the good of *Klal Yisroel*, allowing Hashem to pour his wrath on an inanimate object rather than on the Jewish people.

Each presentation was inspiring, offering new insight into a cherished *chag*. The



crowds were riveted, hardly noticing the time was passing. The camaraderie among the participants, whether regular attendees or newcomers, was heartwarming — all were present for a common purpose.

The Agra D'Pirka year-round program is always a treat, but the special programs on legal holidays are especially timely, meaningful, and appreciated. They are the icing on

the cake, the topping on the proverbial donut. Agra D'Pirka is what makes legal holidays worth waiting for.

For more information about Agra D'Pirka and its programs in Flatbush, Queens, Lakewood, Boro Park, Williamsburg, Baltimore, Monsey, Miami, West Palm Beach, and most recently Boca Raton, call 212 661 9400 or visit agrapirka.org.

BIG APPLE NEWS

Leading the Pack

Incumbent Gov. Kathy Hochul holds a commanding lead in the Democratic primary for governor, with over double the support of her nearest rival, state Attorney General Letitia James.

Hochul leads James 40% to 17% among primary voters, with 7% of Democrats supporting the potential bid of Mayor Bill de Blasio or Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who is a candidate. About 30% of Democrats are undecided.

In a head-to-head matchup, Hochul leads James with 44% support to 26%, the poll by In the Field Global found. It did not include Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-Nassau/Queens). James picks up more of de Blasio and Williams' supporters than Hochul if they're currently not in the primary.

Reeks of Hypocrisy

A pro-Defund the Police official running for governor in New York has caused outrage after the media revealed he travels in New York City with an NYPD detail and lives on a military base that provides 24-hour security.

“Obviously, it's very hypocritical,” said a local pundit about Jumaane Williams. “I feel like it's a situation where regular citizens are not allowed to defend ourselves, and people like our elected officials can. What I would say to the elected officials is if you're so anti-police and so anti-gun, then you should give up all of those privileges that allow you to protect yourself.”

Williams, a racial justice advocate, was elected as the New York City public advocate in 2019 after serving on the NYC Council. He is now running for governor of New York,

where he vows “to bring transformational change to Albany.”

Williams lives on the Fort Hamilton US Army Garrison in Brooklyn, and is provided an NYPD security detail due to his position. The garrison requires everyone to submit a background check and go through security checkpoints.

Ironically, Williams was one of the leading voices on defunding the NYPD last year and took issue with the city's agreement to cut \$1 billion from the funds as insufficient.

Lining His Pockets

Former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is still collecting money from the state government even after resigning due to multiple scandals.

“Andrew M. Cuomo's gross monthly retirement benefit with the New York State and Local Retirement System has been finalized and is \$4,219.11,” said a spokesman for the New York comptroller's office. “He received his first pension payment in October of 2021.”

According to the New York comptroller's office, pension beneficiaries who are convicted of a felony can have their benefits stripped. The former governor currently does not face any felony charges, and denies that he did anything wrong.

Giving Criminals a Free Pass

No wonder crime is burgeoning on the streets.

A Brooklyn homeless man was caught three times in just 36 hours last week, boasting to NYPD officers that he would dodge bail at each turn because he “didn't have a record.”

Agustin Garcia, 63, was charged with robbing two Manhattan subway passengers, wielding a knife against one of them, and stealing beer from a Bronx bodega. Manhattan prosecutors twice asked that Garcia be held on bail due to his crime spree, only to be denied by judges.

It wasn't until the suspect was caught a third time that he was sent to Bellevue Hospital for a psychiatric evaluation.

“We can arrest people, we can cut them loose, incarcerate them, but it's not addressing the underlying problems,” said a frustrated law-enforcement source. “There are so many underlying issues when it comes to revolving-door criminal-justice problems. But by far, the No. 1 issue we see in cases is mental health.”

Arm in Arm Against the Gray Lady

Staffers from the *New York Times* are revolting against their employer in solidarity with colleagues who went on strike.

Wirecutter, a “product recommendation service” offering consumers trusted advice on the latest merchandise being sold, published an article on the “75+ Best Early Black Friday Deals for 2021” ahead of the biggest shopping day of the season. However, when the *Times* shared the article on Twitter, the paper faced significant pressure, including from several employees who felt gyped.

“100 PERCENT of @wirecutterunion is ON STRIKE starting today!” *Times* reporter Davey Alba exclaimed. “These posts are brought to you by NYT assigning work to middle managers & freelancers instead of paying @wirecutterunion a TOTAL OF \$300,000 in raises distributed across 66

PEOPLE! NYT has ONE BILLION DOLLARS in cash!”

Just Another Day at Port Authority

A man snoozing at the Port Authority bus terminal was arrested after cops found him armed with a fully automatic rifle, ammunition, drugs, and a knife.

The suspect, 36-year-old Francisco Vicente of Queens, was taken into custody by Port Authority officers shortly after 4:00 a.m. last weekend. Vicente was sleeping in an area reserved for ticketed passengers when the cops woke him up, asking if he had a ticket, only to find he didn't speak English.

They then discovered Vicente was fully loaded. He had an automatic Anderson AM-15 rifle, along with two loaded magazines with 57 rounds. He bought the weapon and ammo after he'd been stabbed in a domestic dispute, and was heading to Pennsylvania to sell it.

Connecting the Dots

A Department of Education maintenance worker was arrested for a hit-and-run that left a 44-year-old woman dead in the Bronx — months after reporting his vehicle stolen.

Demoy Adams, 35, was arrested and charged with leaving the scene of a fatal accident. The crash happened at East Fordham Road and Morris Avenue around 9:00 p.m. Aug. 28. It killed Murielle Gousse of Prospect Avenue and left a 53-year-old woman injured. Adams reported his vehicle stolen shortly after the crash, after which police obtained video that led to his arrest.