



## TEXT MESSAGES › Eytan Kobre

### Reading Between the Lines of Today's Media and Commentary

**LET'S CELEBRATE** It's the morning after the *chasunah*, and I'm in that morning-after-the-*chasunah* state of being. It's the one where you're no longer feeling yourself sailing in the highest heavens, but still comfortably, pleurably, ensconced on a slightly lower cloud, still awash in the after-emotions of the evening prior — the exaltedness, the sheer delight, the fleeting moments when a glimmer of the Next World broke through into This One.

No, I didn't celebrate the marriage of a child last night. But I was at a wedding, a union of hearts and minds and souls. Not only one such union, but many.

Last night, here in Jerusalem, hundreds of young men with shining faces, from a diverse range of backgrounds and yeshivos — some 30 in all — gathered at the city's Ramat Tamir Hall. They came together under the banner of V'Haarev Na — the program initiated by Rabbi Dovid Newman that is surely one of the greatest things happening in the Torah world today — for a grand *siyum* on five different *masechtos*.

They came to dance and sing, to feast and schmooze, to inspire and to get inspired, to be propelled onward, upward. They arrived for a *chasunah* — theirs.

Many things go into the making of a simchah: a *mesader kiddushin*, *mechutanim*, music, to name a few — and all were present last night. But at the very center of it all are the chassan and kallah, and if every one of these boys was a chassan, then the holy Torah was the kallah.

But doesn't every chassan have his own kallah? Of course. And so it was on this evening, too.

On the *pasuk* in Tehillim (1:2), "*Ki im b'soras Hashem cheftzo uv'Soraso yehegeh yomam valaylah*," Chazal (*Kiddushin* 32b) note that the Torah is referred to first as Toras Hashem and then as *Soraso*, the personal Torah of one who learns it, because once a Jew learns Hashem's Torah, it is transformed into *Torah dilei*, a Torah of that Jew's very own. And last night, every member of V'Haarev Na had his individual kallah with him, *kallah dilei*.

How, after all, do you make Hashem's Torah your own? The answer, says Dovid HaMelech, is, "*Uv'soraso yehegeh yomam valaylah*," by learning it "day and night," at out-of-the-ordinary times: On ski trips and cross-country treks; before, after, and in-between sedarim; and over a *bein hazmanim* — like the young man they spoke of last night who learned 327 *blatt* over one such Yom Tov break. And in unusual sorts of places, too: While sitting in the dentist's chair (having a cavity filled), or waiting for the barber's

chair, or while winging it to Eretz Yisrael (time enough, apparently, for *chavrusas* to finish all of Succah's 55 *blatt*). V'Haarev Na guys have done all of the above and then some.

This *chasunah* had its *mesader kiddushin*, too. Guest speaker Rav Yosef Elefant, the renowned rebbi of so many in Yeshivas Mir, explained why the V'Haarev Na formula of "*Chazarah, chazarah, chazarah*, and then? More *chazarah!*" generates a certain kedushah that's uniquely protective of the Torah learner long after he has closed the Gemara. Torah learning that's out-of-the-box, defying the limitations of time and space, writes the Maharal, affords protection that is similarly transcendent.

Rav Elefant cited the observation of the Sfas Emes that the Chanukah menorah's position to the left as one enters the home means it is on one's right as he exits to the outside. Of the Greeks, whose salient *middah* was *azus*, brazenness, it is said, "*U'fortzu chomos migdalai*" — they trampled every boundary, entering and polluting the precincts of the holy. But we, in turn, engage in spiritual pushback, asserting an *azus* of our own, a sacred brazenness to bring kedushah out of those very precincts of the holy and extend Torah's reach beyond the *daled amos shel halachah* and into the street (or at least the barbershop). On our way out of the hallowed confines of the Jewish home, we pause to turn rightward toward the menorah and gaze at its pure flames, girding ourselves with their holy light for what awaits us outside.

Standing behind everything that took place on this magical evening were the "parents" — the father and mother of V'Haarev Na, which in this case are embodied in one individual, Rabbi Dovid Newman. He has become synonymous with the idea that when Gemara is transmitted to bochurim in a way that enables them to master it and review it until it's "in the bones," there's nothing — not sports nor technological trinkets nor anything else out there — that can compete with the sense of fulfillment that Torah provides.

How can it be that the law of diminishing returns, dictating that the more frequently a pleasure is experienced, the less enjoyable it becomes, applies to every pleasure known to man except for one — the study of Torah, which becomes increasingly pleasurable with each successive review? It's because Torah possesses a quality the entire spectrum of This World's illusory and momentary pleasures does not, Torah is real, and hence lasting, and the further one journeys into its heart, the more that reality is amplified.

Reb Dovid believes in the power of Torah and he believes in his boys, and through him, they too come to believe in themselves



and in what Torah — learned with clarity and reviewed unendingly — can do for them and to them. Once they taste it for themselves, they become V'Haarev Na's most effective ambassadors to other *talmidim*, and thus does a movement, a revolution, flourish.

Joining in the celebration were the *mechutanim*, the rebbeim who came from all over America and Eretz Yisrael to see their *talmidim* in their moment of triumph, as they stood and recited the words of the *hadran* in unison. And at one special table were seated yet other *mechutanim*, a group of *balebatim* from Ramat Bet Shemesh who belong to one of three *chaburos* there —

which are among the many Kinyan Hamasechta groups for *balebatim* around the globe that are successfully following the V'Haarev Na approach.

Rabbi Avi Schneider, who heads one of these *chaburos*, shared an anecdote that begs retelling. "The *chaburah* was learning *Maseches Succah* and upon reaching *daf nunimmel*, we encountered the word *achvei*. A member of the group named Daniel Esses mentioned offhandedly that this word was to be found only twice in this *masechta*, here and on *dafyud tes*. I was skeptical and told him I'd verify his claim using the Bar Ilan CD containing all of Shas. Sure enough, my search turned up three references to that word in Succah, and when I saw him next, I remarked about how impressed I was that he'd been off by only one. He, however, stood his ground, insisting that the Bar Ilan site was mistaken. And upon further investigation, he was right...."

I'd heard stories similar to this one at Shabbos afternoon Pirchei groups long ago, about Jews who lived long ago — but certainly not about a *balebos* in Ramat Bet Shemesh. And that is truly cause for celebration. ●