

# The Night Shift of Torah

*A conversation with Rabbi Shimon Halperin Shlit"á, Rosh Kollel of Kollel Chatzos in Meron*

Rav Shimon Halperin, Rosh Hakollel in Meron



**A** Kollel that learns throughout the night is quite unique! How did you become the Rosh Kollel?

It's really very interesting, because honestly, I am not a night person at all. Staying up to learn at night demands a tight and disciplined schedule which was a big challenge for me.

I live in Tzefas, and one day I saw an announcement that Rabbi Nechemye Hoffman was coming from America to interview kollel yungerleit for an Eretz Yisroel'dik branch. It sounded like an amazing opportunity. I went to meet him and here I am today.

**How is Torah learning different at night than during the day?**

From a perspective of the greatness of learning at night, there are countless sources that talk about the importance of nighttime learning. The Rambam writes, "One must be even more vigilant about learning at night than during the day." (see Orach Chaim 238:1). In Hilchos

Talmud Torah the Rambam further writes, "Whosoever wishes to merit the crown of Torah should be vigilant [to study Torah] all his nights and should not waste even one of them. (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:13). The concept of nighttime learning is also one of the most oft discussed topics in the Zohar. And Ironically, I'm Shimon, named after the Rashb"i who wrote the Zohar since I was born on Lag B'omer, his yahrtzeit!

As for the quality of learning, all the kollel members will tell you there is nothing like it. Talmidei chachomim such as the ones who learn in Kollel Chatzos generally learn by day as well. Yet they will all attest to the greater intensity and passion of their night learning compared to their day learning. By day, life is happening all around; the phones ring, the street is noisy, there are errands, bills and duties to pay. Distraction is undeniable and inevitable. At night, when the world is quiet and asleep, the pressure subsides and clarity reigns. Every word of learning can be savored and enjoyed.

Another difference, is that day kollelim have sederim, where all the yungerleit follow a certain seder of learning. At Kollel Chatzos, everyone comes from a different day kollel which means that all kinds of limudim are learned in one place. This creates an atmosphere of tremendous excitement and variety. When you're so surrounded by the sound of Torah, unbelievable accomplishments are achieved.

**Being situated in Meron, your Kollel must get a lot of visitors from all walks of life. How do people react when they see Kollel Chatzos in action?**

With true amazement. When people walk in they are very inspired. They always ask, "Who is behind this kollel?" Very often visitors are so moved that they want to support this concept. They reach out to the main office to sponsor a night, month or year of Torah. Many times people will come in, sit down and learn alongside the kollel members for a while.



After hours of learning, they daven on behalf of the supporters



The Talmidei Chachomim learning in Meron during the nighttime hours

### Has the Kollel received any well-known visitors?

Certainly. Many respected Rabbanim and Dayanim stop into learn and often stay to speak. Their visits are always a tremendous source of chizuk. The Pshevurska Rebbe Shlit" a visited. Reb Chazkel Roth Shlit" a, the Karlesburg Rav, was here as well. He actually wrote a letter stating how impressed he was to see the power and depth our Kollel members learn with. The Mashpia, Harav Reb Tzvi Meir Zilberberg Shlit" a also visited and expressed his regard, saying, "The world is sustained by the Torah of Kollel Chatzos."

### Can you describe the connection the Yungerleit develop with the names of the sponsors they daven for?

When Yidden sponsor Torah learning at the location of their choice, they give their name for the talmidei chachamim to learn on their behalf. This is amazing because it works both ways, it gives our yungeleit a tremendous sense of achrayus for their learning and hakaros hatov to the sponsors, while at the same time Yidden across the world witness miraculous yeshuos. Because of this, when they pause their learning to mention their names they do so with genuine feeling and kavanah. And the joy they show when they hear that someone they were davening for had a yeshua is priceless.

### As Rosh Kollel you can attest to how life-changing participating in this Kollel can be.

I can give you one specific example that speaks for itself:

There was one kollel member who had many problems in his life as a result of his constant disorganization and procrastination. I know for a fact that since he joined Kollel Chatzos his life has improved 100%.

Why? Now that he learns at night, he has no choice; he knows he absolutely must get to sleep at a certain time. As a result, his focus is clearer, his priorities straighter, and every

moment is accounted for. Beyond that, his entire mishpacha is living a life filled with a beautiful ruach hatorah.

### What would you say to people reading this and thinking how wonderful it would be to have a Kollel Chatzos in their community?

Having a nighttime Kollel in your community is a tremendous zechus and shemira for the people of the city. Right now, there are five Kollel Chatzos locations and there is a waiting list to join at each one. It is my understanding that the main office receives phone calls quite often about opening new locations, and with the right financial backing, Rabbi Nechemye Hoffman, the Director, would certainly pursue the possibility.

You're inspired about the amazing zechus of illuminating the night with the bright words of Torah, but you can also do the same thing. Either by learning on your own every night, or by creating a partnership with Kollel Chatzos and sharing with them the very same blessings.

**To take part in this unique undertaking, please visit [www.chatzos.org](http://www.chatzos.org), and you'll undoubtedly merit countless blessings, as the Zohar promises.**



### And what does the wife say about that?

*After being so inspired by Rabbi Halper-in, I wondered, "What about these women, mothers and wives, like myself, what do they say about their husbands' nighttime learning?" At a recent event the kollel arranged for these wives, I managed to get a glimpse of their perspective.*

**Raizy:** In the beginning it's hard. But then when I think about him stopping I realize I am very proud of what he does. It's a very good feeling.

**Fraidy:** I feel like it changed my life and my idea of what living a life of Torah is all about. And you really see amazing yeshuos. Boruch Hashem I didn't go to the doctor with any of my kids the entire winter.

**Malka:** It was never my husband's schedule to be up at night. But after the first night in the Kollel he was so inspired. There's such purity to the quality of learning. It makes every-thing worthwhile.

### Reb Shimon, you are not alone

A factor that clearly demonstrates the eternal bond between the holy Rashbi and the Kollel Chatzos scholars is, that even in the current turbulent and uncertain times, when Rashbi's gravesite which is usually vibrant with multitude of people around the clock, is now barren and empty especially during nighttime hours, Kollel Chatzos scholars remain the people of Reb Shimon. The connection that has always been is now all the more tangible, when Kollel Chatzos Rabbonim are the only ones there during the late nighttime hours, and feel now more than ever that they are here for Rashbi and Rashbi is there for them. For them and for all those who make Kollel Chatzos possible.