

# KOLLEL CHATZOS AND SUKKOS;

## PROTECTED BY THE WALLS OF KEDUSHA ALL YEAR ROUND

AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS. HOFFMAN

By Binyomin Rivkin

Can you imagine being a young married woman, sleeping alone in your apartment every night, while your husband spent his nights learning alone in the beis medrash? Such was the origin of the now world-famous Kollel Chatzos, the only kollel in the world of its type. Kollel Chatzos now has five locations, with 100 members, and thousands of supporters from around the world. But it all started with a dream, and with great mesirus nefesh.

On Sukkos, family and friends all gather in the sukkah enjoying each other's company and share the aura of holiness while enveloped in kedusha. But on a loftier level, the Ushpizin come and grace our sukkos, adding a heavenly dimension to these holy days.

Dovid Hamelech, the last of the Ushpizin, comes as the Yom Tov is ending. The Zohar tell us that the reason why Dovid Hamelech was chosen to be king of Klall Yisroel until the end of time, was in the zchus of his waking up at the auspicious time of chatzos, to serve Hashem. Today too, there is a group of men who follow in the footsteps of Dovid Hamelech, utilizing the eis ratzon of chatzos to arise with supernatural strength and serve Hashem. These men are the esteemed members of Kollel Chatzos. We spoke with Rebbitzin Hoffman, wife of Rabbi Nechemya Hoffman, founder of Kollel Chatzos, to hear more about the origins of the kollel, and the brachos and yeshuos which

reach those who support it.

### Can you please tell us origins of Kollel Chatzos?

My husband was always mesmerized with the segulos of chatzos. The sforim hakedoshim tell us that chatzos is a tremendous eis ratzon and special time for deveikus and limud Hatorah, the ultimate way to connect with the Eibishter. When he was younger, he always took advantage of this special time, pulling himself out of his sleep, and savoring the precious pre-dawn hours, staying up to learn. After we got married, he would continue his routine, waking up at chatzos and learning himself in our apartment in Monroe.

After a short amount of time, you know what happens. In a quiet house, with everyone sleeping, its very hard to learn alone. He decided to learn in the beis medrash, but that did not help either, as there was no one else there!

One Friday night at the seuda, he tells me, "I am going to open a kollel of yungeleit to learn at chatzos!" It was his dream, and he was determined to make it happen. He put in an ad in the local daily announcements stating that Kollel Chatzos is opening and yungerleit are welcome to join

Slowly, calls came in, and to our delight, the yungeliet who were interested were not just regular yungeleit. Each one was a mitzuyan in his own right! They were excited and enthusiastic, and Boruch Hashem, the Kollel got off to a great start! As the rest on Monroe was in a

deep sleep, our small group in kollel were holding up the world with their sweet words of Torah. We did not have a benefactor, nor did we know who to turn to for funding, so with my approval, my husband used our chasuna money to fund the first group of yungeleit!

### How did the community of supporters grow from nothing to the thousands of yidden who donate to kollel chatzos?

As the kollel grew, my husband had to think of new ways to raise money for the kollel. First, it was hard for him to explain the greatness of the chatzos kollel to potential sponsors, and to many people, it seemed strange. "Why would you make a kollel at midnight?" many people asked. It was hard to bring in donors and supporters. My husband spent some time finding all the maarei mekomos in chazal which speak about the special zchus and segulos reserved for those who arise at chatzos and learn. He published brochures detailing these divrei chazal, and distributed them to local shuls hoping that people will be properly informed of the kollel's mission. We were starting to see some response, and donations were trickling in. However, unfortunately we had complaints from local gabbaim about these pamphlets, as they are shaimos, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for shuls to properly dispose of them. We were stuck.

But Hashem already prepared the solution for us. At the same time that this was going on, an unexpected phenomenon was also happening.

We started receiving phone calls from supporters of the kollel, telling us about amazing yeshuos that were happening in their lives. They were all attributing the yeshuos in their lives to their donations to kollel chatzos. The phone in our house would ring at all times of the day, and I would field all the calls. Various people would excitedly tell us the unbelievable nissim that happened to them and their families. We realized that maybe this was the answer! Instead of writing the divrei chazal on the brochures, upsetting the gabboim, we started printing the stories of yeshuos on the brochures! This idea took off, and as soon as the tzibbur realized that supporting kollel chatzos opens up a pipeline to shomayim, the ring of the telephone became a regular sound in our house. People called at all times of the day and night, asking the kollel yungerleit to learn and deven in their zchus, and of course, they donated to the kollel.

Everycaller needed a different yeshuah. The young mother from Williamburg needed a refuah. The middle-aged man from Texas, just laid off from his job, needed parnassah. Another mother from South Africa needed a shidduch for her daughter. The list goes on and on. The calls were coming in so heavily, atht it was simply impossible for me to keep up with them. We turned our basement into an office and hired a yungeman to answer the phones and take donations, all while tracking our stories of yeshuos. Now, the kollel is funded by thousands of yidden around the world who all have the zchus of Torah to protect them and help them merit the yeshuos they need.

### Can you tell us some stories of yeshuos?

There are so many of them! A few come to mind. One fascinating story that I remember is as follows. A man sent us an email with a heartfelt plea. He was just diagnosed with a dreaded disease r"l, and is undergoing an emergency surgery. He wanted to donate to the kollel, and have the yungeleit daven for him that the procedure should go well and he should be healed. A few days later, we received another email. He writes that he was on the operating table and the doctors took

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another scan before surgery. Suddenly, he heard a small commotion. The doctors were talking to each other, "He is clean! There's nothing there!" he heard them say! To his shock, he realized that indeed, his sickness was healed by Hashem Himself, without a doctor making one cut! He was positive that his miraculous recovery was in the zchus of supporting kollel chatzos! We showed the thread of emails to a supporter, and he could not believe it! He was simply blown away by the sheer miracle that happened! All of these correspondences were in email, and are all documented. Although it is hard to believe, but we have all the emails to verify the facts!

I'll tell you another story that happened. A yungerman had to undergo a difficult heart surgery. Naturally, he was very nervous about the impending medical procedure, and he called our office to make a donation and ask that we have him in mind. A few days later, he had a dream. His zaide, Rav Yona Forst zt"l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Nitra, came to him to relay a special message. (It is important to note that Nitra, was an "Oberlander yeshiva" which followed the minhagim of the Chasam Sofer. Understanding the powerful tikunim and inyanim of learning at chatzos, it was a normal hanhagah for buchorim in Nitra to wake up Thursday night at chatzos and learn until the morning.) His grandfather told him "Don't worry. The operation will be a success because of the zchus of your support of kollel chatzos!" And sure enough, it was!

### Wow! Are there any yeshuos that happened with the families of the kollel yungeliet?

Absolutely! The wives of the yungeleit tell me all the time that they see special siyata dishmaya in their homes, and

they attribute it all to the fact that their husbands are "chatzos yidden." On can imagine the great mesiras nefesh of the wives, allowing their husbands to leave for the entire night...every night! At our melave malke events, one kollel wife told me how she recently went to the doctor for a checkup with one of her children. When she saw the doctor, he immediately asked her, "Didi you switch doctors?" Surprised, she replied that she did not. "We haven't seen you here in two years!" the doctor continued. It was only then that she realized that none of her children got sick in the last two years! After a brief moment, she realized that it was two years since her husband joined the kollel!

Another kollel wife told me that when her husband joined the kollel, she was worried about her children waking up in middle of the night. But to her delight, they have slept peacefully since her husband joined kollel chatzos! Not once did she have to get up for them in middle of the night.

### What message can you tell Klall Yisroel in honor of sukkos?

As I explained, the homes of our kollel yungeliet are elevated. They are derhoiben, and their entire families feel it. The children walk around with their head held high, proudly saying "My father learns in kollel chatzos!" Not only are the homes of the yungeliet gebened, but the suppoorters of kollel chatzos have seen extra siyatta dishmaya in so many ways. In the upcoming days of sukkos, Klall Yisroel enters the sukkah, the "tzila dimehemenu" under the protection of Hashem. With your support of kollel chatzos, you are always protected by the zchus of Torah, and you can remain under devine protection the entire year!