

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל ומרת שושנה  
ומשפחתם שיחיו שיינער  
ולזכות  
ר' ברוך ומרת רחל אהבה ומשפחתם  
שיחיו ולדמן  
נדפס ע"י הוריהם  
ר' צבי וחנה שיחיו מאראנץ



כולל תפארת זקנים לוי יצחק - בית חכמת נשים



# Increasing Torah Learning in the Golden Age

“He sends his assistant to buy a tie, races over [to the nursing home] by car as fast as possible, presents it to his elderly father and says ‘You see? Since today is Father’s Day and I am obligated in *kibbud av*, I bought you a beautiful tie as a gift! Have a good day!’ Until the next year [when he will visit him again] with a different color tie!”

There is a tragic misconception in modern society that as people advance in age they need to slow down. Once men and women have reached a point in life that their physical strength starts waning, they are encouraged to retire, even forced out of career positions and their sources of income.

This fosters a debilitating feeling of inferiority by the elderly. They begin to feel unwanted, unhelpful and unable to continue accomplishing good things. Gradually they start feeling like a burden to their families and society at large and the many daytime hours that had been previously well spent in the workplace become empty and lonely.

According to Torah the very opposite is true. Despite their decline in physical prowess, the elderly possess the invaluable asset of experience. *Iyov* states וְרוֹב שָׁנִים יוֹדִיעוּ חִכְמָה—many years impart wisdom. The Gemara teaches that *talmidei chachamim* become wiser with age. Even the unlearned have the unmatched wisdom acquired through life experience. This is the reason the Torah commands מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִּקְוֶם—You should rise before the elderly.

In reality, as their physical abilities gradually diminish, their wisdom and ability to mentor and inspire become ever stronger. Every industry would benefit greatly from keeping their elderly engaged in some capacity so that the younger generation can grow from the knowledge they have accumulated over the years.

Alas, the fact is that there are growing numbers of elderly leaving

the workforce while they still have many years to be productive members of society. When there is a weakening of the body it is a sign that the *neshamah* must become stronger and more active. This is an opportunity to channel their ambition, which had until now been expressed in their enthusiastic pursuit of a livelihood and career, into unprecedented spiritual growth.

During<sup>2</sup> the *farbrengen* of Shabbos, Chof Av 5740 (*yahrtzeit* of the Rebbe’s father Harav Hagaon Hamekubal R’ Levi Yitzchok), the Rebbe announced that the time had come to place a special emphasis on encouraging the elderly to increase in Torah learning with public *shiurim*. A *hachlata* made

in connection with many people has greater chances of succeeding, and establishing an official organization to facilitate these classes (to be called *Kolel Tiferes Z’keinim*) would ensure success in a much greater measure.

On Motzei Shabbos<sup>3</sup>, the Rebbe held an additional *farbrengen* in connection with Chof Av and spoke at length about the brand new campaign. In light of the unfortunate emotional circumstances so many elderly are forced into, providing them these opportunities is a great expression of *ahavas Yisrael*.

Therefore, the Rebbe said, it would be appropriate to establish an official *kolel* in every city and every shul, with set times for public *shiurim*; and participants should receive a monthly

On a practical note, the Rebbe added:

The perfect setting to start gathering groups of elderly to learn Torah is in the old age homes. The administrators would be grateful for the opportunity to provide productive programming for their residents and the residents would be happy to participate and appreciative that outsiders come to visit.

(*Likutei Sichos* vol. 29, p. 266)

THEY BEGIN TO FEEL UNWANTED,  
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GOOD THINGS ANY MORE



A GROUP FROM KOLEL TIFERES ZKEINIM LEVI YITZCHOK JOIN THE REBBE FOR MINCHA AT THE REBBE’S HOME, 17 ELUL 5748.



“THE EXCITEMENT AND COMMITMENT OF THOSE YOUNG MEN, WHO LEARNED TORAH UNDER IMPOSSIBLE CONDITIONS, WILL MOTIVATE THE ELDERLY...”



stipend (in amounts of 18 in the local currency) so that they are motivated to participate consistently and punctually. This is the responsibility of the local rov and it would be best for the *shiurim* to have at least 10 participants.

To unite all of these *kolels*, they should learn the same topic and have the same name. Since the weekly *parsha* is relevant to all, it would be best to learn the daily portion of the *parsha* at these classes.

The Rebbe then introduced the unifying name of these *shiurim*:

“Kolel” is a common name for Torah establishments. Besides, it is most frequently associated with the setting in which young newly married men learn and would therefore be

## Levi Yitzchok

Upon establishing the *kolel* the Rebbe explained the connection of the names Levi and Yitzchok to Torah study.

**Levi:** Shevet Levi was entrusted with carrying the *aron* containing the *luchos*, which encompass all of Torah. They were also designated as the Torah teachers of *klal Yisrael*.

**Yitzchok:** In the order of the Yomim Tovim, Shavuot—the time of *matan Torah*—is connected to Yitzchok Avinu. The unique connection to the Torah learning of elderly can be found in the saying of *Chazal* “יצחק זקן ויושב” בישיבה—Yitzchok was an elder sitting and learning in yeshiva.” Although this applied to all the *avos*, Yitzchok lived the longest of the three.

At the first *kinus* for Tiferes Z’keinim Levi Yitzchok, the Rebbe explained lessons in *avodas Hashem* from the names Levi and Yitzchok.<sup>4</sup>

**Levi:** Etymologically linked with the word ילוח which means “connection”—expresses the obligation of Shevet Levi to connect *yidden* with Hashem through personal example and gentle persuasion.

**Yitzchok:** Etymologically linked to the word צחוק which means “laughter”—expresses the necessity for Shevet Levi’s work to be done with joy.

more comforting for people uneasy with being associated with old age. The word ‘*kolel*’ also connotes the idea of actively including and involving others, so the expectation is that the participants will encourage many others to join the *shiurim* as well.

“Tiferes Z’keinim—Beauty of the Elderly” is associated with the iconic “Tiferes Bachurim” organization which thrived until recently in Communist Russia. This organization was established by Chassidim to provide learning opportunities for single and newly married men who were forced to work many hours each day to make a living. The *shiurim* were a spiritual lifeline for them.

“Invoking the memory of the excitement and commitment of those young men, who learned Torah under impossible conditions, will motivate the elderly to be committed to their current Torah learning in a their current relaxed and upbeat environment.”

## The Three Pillars

The *kolel* should incorporate, in addition to the element of Torah, the other two foundational concepts of *avodah* and *gemilus chassadim*.

1. The *shiurim* should be linked to any *tefillah* during the day.
2. On weekdays there should be a *tzedakah* box on the table to afford the opportunity for everyone to give *tzedakah*.
3. Each *kolel* should establish a *gemach* so that the *tzedakah* generated by the group should have an enduring impact.

Then the Rebbe made the new campaign very personal, first prefacing:

“The following is a personal request to those who feel a special closeness and friendship and are aware of the great hardships the leaders of the *yidden* in Communist Russia endured with great *mesiras nefesh*.”

Since the establishment of these *kolels* was introduced in connection with Chof Av, the *yahrtzeit* of the Rebbe’s father, who endured unbearable suffering and imprisonment, and ultimately was

*nistalek* in *galus* due to his heroic efforts to maintain Yiddishkeit under the evil communist regime, it would be proper to add the name “Levi Yitzchok.” (See more about this in the sidebar “Levi Yitzchok”)

“This will certainly be a source of great *nachas* for his *neshamah*,” the Rebbe concluded.

“As it is customary to make a *magbis* (appeal) every Chof Av for Keren Levi Yitzchok, the proceeds will be committed to an official financial participation in every new *kolel* that will be established. Those that will be



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES DOLLARS AT A GATHERING FOR MEMBERS OF THE KOLEL, 30 KISLEV 5748.

30 KISLEV 5748, MORECHAI BARONI VIA JEM 1/7516





MORDECHAI BARON VIA JEM147510

A GATHERING FOR THE ELDERS OF KOLEL TIFERES ZKEINIM LEVI YITZCHOK, 30 KISLEV 5748.

named “Kolel Tiferes Z’keinim” will receive a token \$18 participation and those called “Kolel Tiferes Z’keinim Levi Yitzchok” will receive a \$100 participation.”

On Rosh Chodesh Elul, the Rebbe announced that special *shiurim* for elderly women should be established under the unifying name “Beis Chochmas Nashim.”<sup>5</sup>



Shluchim throughout the world immediately opened the *kolels* in their respective cities and increased the general *mivtzoim* and *hafatza* work in old age homes and similar facilities for the elderly. This was done with a unique *geshmak*, since this was a *mosad* the Rebbe closely associated with a *nachas ruach* for his father Harav Levi Yitzchok.

Rabbi Aharon Wolf, newly married and learning in *kolel* at the time,

lived in the apartment building on the corner of Eastern Parkway and Brooklyn Avenue.

“There were many elderly Jews living in that building, spending most of the daytime hours sitting in the hallways and outdoors. Together with another *yungerman*, we arranged a *shiur* for them in a small shul nextdoor and established a Kolel Tiferes Z’keinim Levi Yitzchok for our building. We notified the Rebbe of our project and received a \$100 bill from *mazkirus*.”

Rabbi Zalman Deitsch, Rabbi Yosef Deitsch and an anonymous donor formed a committee to establish the Kolel Tiferes Z’keinim Levi Yitzchok in Crown Heights. Rabbi Sholom Ber Brod was hired to coordinate groups of volunteers to visit old age homes throughout New York City to give *shiurim* and to do *mivtzoim*. Through

When I established Kolel Tiferes Z’keinim and called for an increase of *peulos* with the elderly, there were those who questioned the mental capacity of the elderly and whether focusing on their spiritual growth was worthwhile. Recently, I received a report from a *bochur*, who visited an old age home with a lulav and esrog on Sukkos. He had entered the room of an elderly man that everyone believed was mentally detached from reality, as he had not responded to anything for months. To the shock of all the doctors, the man held the lulav and esrog and recited the proper *brachos* unassisted. It reminded him of his youth and it brought him out of his mental coma.

*Shabbos Parshas Toldos, Mevorchim Kislev, 5741<sup>6</sup>*



these activities, thousands of elderly *Yidden* were reached and afforded the opportunity to learn Torah and perform many mitzvos.

In the spring of 5743, when Rabbi Menachem Gerlitzky was hired to lead the organization, it was decided to open a *kolel* for retired *anash*, to learn on a regular basis in one of the rooms of 770 and to be paid on a monthly basis.

In reply to their notification of the plans for this *kolel* the Rebbe instructed:

כפשוט שייך להגבאים שיחיו

Obviously, this is the responsibility of the *gabaim* [of 770].

Since the *kolel* was an integral part of the shul, the Rebbe instructed that it should be the financial responsibility of the *gabaim* of 770. In addition, a “Chochmas Nashim” branch was also established and *shiurim* were arranged

for elderly women in the women’s section of 770.

This campaign merited great attention and affection from the Rebbe throughout the years.

“In the Summer of 5744,” Rabbi Gerlitzky relates, “there was an idea to bring the elderly participants of the Tiferes Z’keinim programs throughout New York City to the Rebbe. I approached Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht (who arranged all the children’s rallies with the Rebbe) and asked him how one could be sure if the Rebbe will speak at a *kinus* in 770.”

Rabbi Hecht explained that he never knows whether the Rebbe will participate or say a *sicha* to the children. In general, when large groups of guests were in 770 for a *tefillah*, the Rebbe would daven in the main shul. “I bring the children for *mincha*, and every time the Rebbe speaks to them it is a surprise for me.”

The organizers decided to invite the hundreds of participants to 770 for a special event, complete with a children’s choir, video, and refreshments, and sent in a *duch* to the Rebbe with their plans. The date was set for 23 Menachem-Av.

To everyone’s delight, the Rebbe joined the large group for *mincha*, holding the schedule of the event in his hand, and addressed the crowd with a special *sicha* that included, among other themes, the connection of the day’s portion of Chitas to the name Levi Yitzchok (see sidebar “Levi Yitzchok”).

Following the *sicha* the Rebbe personally gave bundles of dollar bills to the organizers to be distributed to all the participants.

In light of the Rebbe’s noticeable satisfaction from the event, these *kinusim* were arranged annually on Chanukah and during the summer.

Chanukah 5746 was during the painful era of the court case of the *sefarim*. At the time, the Rebbe was

going to the Ohel every weekday. A *kinus* for the elderly was being planned and the Rebbe responded to a *duch* about the upcoming event:

כדאי לבוא כל הקבוצות ביחד, ובאם יש צורך בתיווך רבני אנ”ש שי.

It would be good for all the groups to come [to 770] together, and if there is a need, it should be arbitrated by the Lubavitcher Rabbonim.

Rabbi Gerlitzky recalls: “Initially, when I received the above answer from the Rebbe a few weeks beforehand, I did not understand what the Rebbe was referring to. Who was planning an event for the elderly in 770 without coordinating together with Tiferes Z’keinim? We finally realized that since the Rebbe started going to the Ohel every day since the beginning of the court case (which started on Yud Tes Kislev), he would remain in 770 only one day during Chanukah to address the traditional *kinusim*, and that he was referring to the Tzivos Hashem rally for the children.”

After intense discussions with the organizers of the two *kinusim*, the rabbonim and another answer from the Rebbe, it was decided that all the participants of both *kinusim* would be present in the main *shul* for this gathering.

The main shul was packed to full capacity with children and adults of all ages and the Rebbe opened the *sicha* by emphasizing the fact that this gathering was special and unique in that it unites all age groups.

Rabbi Gerlitzky remembers another amazing occurrence in connection with these *kinusim*. In the summer of 5747, the date chosen for the *Kinus Tiferes Z’keinim* was 16 Av.

The morning of the *kinus*, I was in the office making last minute arrangements for the event and someone notified me that Rabbi Groner was looking for me. When I arrived he told me that the Rebbe

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wants to see me. He knocked on the Rebbe's door and left the room so I was alone with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe stood at the doorway of his room and started to speak to me for several minutes. "Since I will be going to the Ohel this afternoon,

please pass on to the participants of the *kinus* my *brachos* to them..." After finishing, the Rebbe walked back into his room and handed me bundles of dollar bills to be distributed to the participants, and said, "You will certainly submit a report of the *kinus*."

The experience was so shocking for me that I had almost no recollection of what the Rebbe said. Thankfully, Rabbi Groner and Rabbi Klein listened in and together they wrote up the Rebbe's message, which I immediately brought to Hanachos Hatmimim to prepare for editing. The Rebbe edited the entire *sicha* and I read it to the participants in the *kinus* that afternoon.

In the summer of 5748, the Rebbe was davening in his home on President Street and the *kinus* was arranged for 17 Elul in 770. The elderly men were present in the Rebbe's home for *mincha* and Rabbi Groner told me to approach the Rebbe after davening. The Rebbe gave me a bundle of dollar bills and said a short *bracha* for the participants. Immediately afterwards, Mr. David Chase approached the Rebbe regarding the groundbreaking ceremony in front of 770, which the Rebbe joined later that day.

“The purpose of establishing this *kolel* is not to increase the amount of organizations in the world. The goal is to increase the amount of *Yidden* learning Torah. The details are irrelevant, so long as Torah learning spreads.

“Flooding the world with *limmud haTorah* will be a proper preparation for the imminent era of *yemos haMoshiach*, when the world will be ‘flooded’ with the knowledge of Hashem.”<sup>7</sup>

1. Sichos Kodesh, 5740 Vol. 3(2) page 975.
2. Ibid page 884.
3. Ibid, page 897
4. Toras Menachem, Hisvaduyos 5744. Vol. 4 page 2469.
5. A comprehensive collection of the relevant *sichos* in connection with “Kolel Tiferes Z'keimim Levi Yitzchok - Chochmas Nashim” was edited by the Rebbe and published in Likkutei Sichos Vol. 29 pages 263-271.
6. Sichos Kodesh, 5741 vol. 1 page 467.
7. Likkutei Sichos Vol. 29 page 271.