

Mishpacha

JEWISH FAMILY WEEKLY



Yes, your son can
love to learn

From a high school in Monsey,
Rabbi Dovid Newman sparks
a global revolution

והערב נא
LEARN IT! - REVIEW IT! - LOVE IT! - OWN IT! - LIVE IT!

Rave Review



Thousands of *bochurim* have gone through the yeshivah system without tasting the full strength of Torah's otherworldly sweetness. Many only open a Gemara during *seder* or at test time; others feel Gemara learning just isn't for them. How can a *bochur* learn in a way that when he goes through the Gemara, the Gemara also goes through him? **Rabbi Dovid Newman's** students are testimony that he's found an answer

BY **Eytan Kobre** PHOTOS **Mordy Gilden**



SOME

of the stories Rabbi Dovid Newman shares sound familiar, like this one:

Undergoing a root canal in the dentist's chair, the patient was in great pain. They gave him Novocain and then some more, but the pain wouldn't subside. So he just closed his eyes and went through the shakla v'tarya of the last two blatt he had learned, and by the time he was finished, the dentist was too.

And this one:

A blackout had darkened the neighborhood, but that wasn't going to stop the determined bochurim in the local yeshivah. The next day, the proof of their love of Torah was there for all to see — in the wax drippings dotting the pages of their Gemaras.

Many of us have heard stories like these before. But those were about *gedolim* in pre-war Europe, while the anecdotes above actually happened recently in Monsey, New York. Seated in the dentist's chair was a teenage *talmid* of Rabbi Newman who just months before would have readily admitted that Gemara didn't hold much appeal for him.

And the boys gathered around candlelight in the pitch-black *beis medrash*? Also Reb Dovid's boys, who've discovered that Abaye and Rava can give them a feeling of fulfillment that the exploits of the Yankees, Knicks, and Rangers cannot (although they still check the box scores).

Mention the word "revolutionary" and images of guys in fatigues and berets come to mind. Reb Dovid, on the other hand, could be the hat-and-jacket attired fellow next to you in Rockland Kosher doing his last-minute Erev Shabbos shopping. Yet this mild-mannered high school *rebbe* has been quietly revolutionizing the way hundreds of *bochurim* in *mesivtas* across America feel about learning Torah.

It all began when Reb Dovid looked around and saw an entire category of *mesivta bochurim*, whose needs were not being addressed. High schools have lots of *talmidim* who, in Reb Dovid's words, "have their engines running." But then there are large numbers of *bochurim*, hundreds, thousands of them, many of whom aren't yet at the point to want, only to "want to want" to learn. They've been through eight, ten, twelve years of the yeshivah system, yet they still haven't tasted the otherworldly sweetness of Torah in its full strength.

These are good boys, who know in their heads that the Torah, which Dovid Hamelech calls "more desirable than gold" and "sweeter than honey," has got to be a source of deep joy. But they've never yet gotten to feel that in their bones; if only they could, they'd keep going back on their own for more. And so the resulting inner void gets filled, at best, with distractions like pro sports and gadgets, and some get entangled in less

At the "wedding" festivities, boys couldn't believe their own good fortune. "This past zeman was a life-changer for me. I never thought I could know a Gemara in the bones"



While thousands of boys have gone through "the system" uninspired, Rabbi Dovid Newman has found the key to unlock their hearts



wholesome pursuits. Meanwhile, the precious opportunity of their yeshiva years is passing them by, year after unfulfilled year.

“I learned in the Yeshiva of Staten Island,” says Rabbi Newman, whose father, Rav Moshe Boruch Newman, is a longtime *rebbe* there, “and I know what worked for me — inspiring stories from *gedolim* of yesteryear and regular *bechin*os. We’d get tested every month, after every ten *blatt*, at the end of the *zeman*, and we even were awarded cash prizes — it was great. But here’s the thing: If the engine is running, that is, if a *bochur* is motivated, if he can make a *leining* and the Gemara talks to him, then all these things are wonderful. *Bechin*os create accountability, they rev the engine.

“But no *bechinah* or incentive in the world is going to truly start a *bochur*’s engine if it’s not already running. It’s a no-win situation: If a boy doesn’t do well on the test, he’ll feel hopeless; if he does well, the effort invested was probably just enough to get through the *bechinah*, but it won’t propel him forward.”

Sweetening the Deal When he began teaching eight years ago, Rabbi Newman was doing it the way everyone else did, with regular *bechin*os and incentives that keep the pressure up and the boys in line. But it wasn’t working, except perhaps for the very best boys in the class; the others had tuned out to varying degrees. Even for the top *talmidim*, Reb Dovid realized, it simply didn’t make sense that something as delectable as Torah learning should need the element of compulsion that *bechin*os and prizes represent. We don’t pressure kids to eat ice cream, do we?

And so Reb Dovid set out to find a way to allow the Torah’s natural power to work its effects, without the need for external pressure, whether in the form of *bechin*os or incentives. This eventually became a program called V’haarev Na, which takes its name, of course, from the first words of the *tefillah* we recite each morning asking Hashem to make His Torah sweet *b’finu*, in our mouths. Reb Dovid explains that “sure, Torah is sweet. But only if the Gemara is *b’finu*, only if we can smoothly read and understand the flow of the *shakla v’tarya*, the Gemara’s give-and-take, can we develop the taste buds in our

mouths to savor that sweetness.”

How, then, can a person learn in such a way that when he goes through a piece of Gemara, the Gemara also goes through *him*? The answer isn’t Reb Dovid’s, but one that Chazal stress repeatedly: “*Chazarah, chazarah, chazarah...* and then? *Chazarah!*” Those were the very words that Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel *ztz”l* said to Reb Dovid’s *chaver*, Rabbi Eliyahu Koval, when the latter brought some of his *talmidim* to the unforgettable Mirrer *rosh yeshivah* to ask for a *brachah* for *ahavas haTorah*.

Constant review is what puts the Gemara *b’finu*, in the *talmid*’s mouth. Once he knows it and can read smoothly down the page without getting stuck, his reviews take an ever shorter amount of time. He begins to feel he owns the *daf*, and the one after that, until he can honestly say he owns a *masechta*. The cycle is self-perpetuating: Constant review leads to mastery of the Gemara and subsequent feelings of accomplishment, which lead, in turn, to yet further review. Reb Dovid says that “some of my *bochurim* have these words written on the first page of their Gemaras: ‘You need to *chazer* in order to *chazer*.’ What does that mean? That you need to know the Gemara clearly and once you do, you can open a Gemara and it’s talking to you, which is so *geshmak*. And the better you know it, the more *geshmak* it is to review it again.”

Fast-forward six years, and what began with one high school class has now blossomed into an integral part of the everyday curriculum in close to 25 *mesivtas*, from Monsey to Far Rockaway, from Atlanta to Denver to Toronto, with more joining every year. Rav Mordechai Wolmark, *rosh yeshivah* of Monsey’s Yeshiva Shaarei Torah, where Reb Dovid teaches, says that V’haarev Na’s great success convinced him to incorporate, this coming year, elements of the program in every grade and throughout the entire curriculum, including the *iyun shiurim*. “Today’s *nisyonos* are very different from those of years past, and waiting for boys to develop a *geshmak* by appreciating the depth of Torah often doesn’t work the way it did 20 years ago. I’m excited to do this because it will give them the *geshmak* now when they need it.”

“No *bechinah* or incentive in the world is going to truly start a *bochur*’s engine if it’s not already running. It’s a no-win situation”



You Can Own It In Rabbi Newman's class, the critical first day of the *zeman* is a virtual Yom Tov, the beginning of an exhilarating journey toward owning a *masechta*. There's a big *kiddush*, and each student gets a high-end Cross pencil set and a Gemara, both bearing his name. He says it makes the boys realize he must have something valuable to sell.

"I tell them they don't have to board my train, but if they want to, it means *chazering* three times a day, and on their own time. And believe me, they do. On the bus, during lunch or supper, they find the 20 minutes it takes to *chazer* half an *amud* three times."

To make it possible for his boys to gain ownership of what they've learned, Reb Dovid carefully chooses from among a group of *masechtos* — *Berachos*, *Succah*, *Sotah*, *Taanis*, *Beitzah*, to name some of them. The boys know they're on their way toward conquering an entire tractate, so quiet reigns in the classroom, with no one wanting to miss a line or even a word, and certainly not an entire day. One *bochur*, Reb Dovid recalls, underwent hernia surgery that ended a half hour before *shiur* was to begin. He called in from the hospital, not wanting to miss even one day of Gemara.

There's a physically tangible component to the ownership idea, too. During his *shiur* prep, Reb Dovid is busy figuring out ways to make the Gemara easier to understand. He comes up with different footnotes for the *bochurim* to write into their Gemaras, all in order to make the *shakla v'tarya*, a seemingly indecipherable code of unpunctuated and unvowelized Aramaic and Hebrew, reviewable by the *bochurim* on their own.

"The biggest key in owning a *masechta* is to write in your Gemara and turn it into something that reads back to you," Reb Dovid explains. "When we learned *Taanis*, we had, by one *bochur's* count, 1,549 footnotes. In *Succah*, it was 2,448. It creates such an attachment to their Gemaras that I overheard one boy say to

another, 'We need life insurance on this Gemara.'"

One *rebbe* told his boys on the first day, "Write in your Gemara and it will become so much a part of you that you won't want to part with it." Turning to one boy, he said, "I'll prove it to you — here, take this hundred dollar bill and go upstairs to Rabbi Newman's *shiur* room. Go around the room and see if anyone will sell you his Gemara for a hundred bucks." Not one guy went for it.

Reb Dovid is passionate about the idea that when you own something, when it's part of you, there's no limit to what you'll do for it. With all the stress on *chazarah*, he tries hard not to emphasize quantity, which would send the wrong message. Instead, the focus is on quality and effort. He writes down every instance he sees of *mesirus nefesh* by a *bochur*, and at the end-of-year *siyum*, talks about how each *bochur* was *moser nefesh* over the past year.

"Before *bein hazmanim*," says Rabbi Newman, "everyone in my *shiur* makes a *kabbalah* about how much they're going to *chazer*. This year, there were 20 *bochurim* in the *shiur* and when they came back, we tallied up how much they had *chazered* and it came out to an astounding 1,975 *blatt*. I was very happy, of course, but I turned to them and said, 'Rabbosai, the number is beautiful, but I want to know when it was hard.' I went around the *shiur* room. One boy was on his way to Eretz Yisrael and at 3 a.m. there was an hour stopover in Madrid, so he sat down in the terminal and spent that hour *chazering* Gemara. Another *bochur* had committed to *chazer* two *blatt* a day, morning and night. After the Pesach Seder, he remembered he hadn't done his two *blatt*, so he went back downstairs to the dining room to do his two *blatt*."

Not Your Standard Chasunah

The program's growth has been exponential, but for Rabbi Newman, it's never about the numbers, neither

the number of *mesivtas* that are part of V'haarev Na, nor about how many *blatt* a *bochur* has learned. For Reb Dovid, what really matters is the quality of a *bochur's* knowledge and how much of himself he has invested in his learning. The two essential questions are: First, does a boy have the *gemara in der beiner*, in the bones, and second, has he acquired an ownership interest in a *masechta* through tens of rounds of *chazarah* both in yeshivah and on his own time?

The answers that boys themselves give to those questions are captured on a video Reb Dovid recently produced, and they're interspersed with scenes of dancing at a very unusual "*chasunah*" — replete with *bentshers* reading "In honor of the Chasunah between Yisroel and Avinu Shebashamayim" — that takes place each year in Monsey on the 7th of Nissan. That's when alumni of V'haarev Na who have returned from Eretz Yisrael for *bein hazmanim* gather together for "*retzufos*" — i.e., four uninterrupted hours of learning the *masechta* Reb Dovid taught them, which they've been reviewing ever since, followed by a "*chasunah*" meal and dancing. For next year, Reb Dovid plans such a "*chasunah*" for well over 500 V'haarev Na *talmidim*.

When the video, titled *V'haarev Na*, appeared on a popular Jewish news site, it garnered 14,000 views in one week, along with hundreds of e-mails and phone calls from around the globe from people wanting to know how they or their children could become part of the program. A successful young Brooklyn businessman was so taken by the video that he's now working with Reb Dovid and others to bring a similar program to the world of working *balabatim*. The new initiative, "Kinyan Hamasechta — Own the Masechta," is set to launch after the summer.

"One of the *bochurim* you see dancing," Reb Dovid shares, "came over to me with tears streaming down his face, and whispered, 'The feeling I feel now, after learning four hours straight, I didn't know



“Take this hundred dollar bill and go upstairs to Rabbi Newman’s shiur room. Go around the room and see if anyone will sell you his Gemara for a hundred bucks. Not one guy went for it”

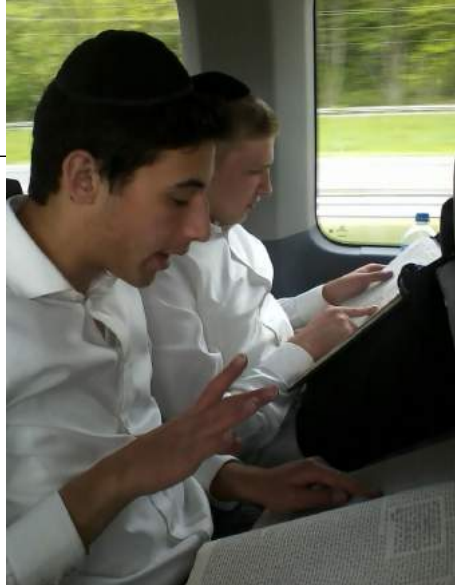


there was such a feeling, such a *simchas haTorah*. Later that night, I got a text message from another boy: *I just want to let Rebbi know that this past zeman was a life-changer for me. I always wanted to be part of the olam and know the taste of a good juicy piece of Gemara, but I was never encouraged to believe that I could know a Gemara in the bones. It makes me feel amazing when another bochur comes over to me to ask for help with a Gemara. It's like my life is starting again, but this time with the love of Torah leading the way.*

Another boy on the video talks about Torah like a natural-born *masmid*, but, Reb Dovid confides, it wasn't always quite that way. "The first day of the *zeman*, I always start off with such a *bren*, letting the boys know how much *mesikus* they're going to get through Torah. So I was giving my whole pitch about how 'you're going to be *koneh* this *masechta*, *chazering* it over and over, you're gonna live it, you're gonna love it.' Then I stopped and said, 'I'm assuming everyone here wants to know a *masechta*. Does anyone here not want to know a *masechta*?'"

"And then, one *bochur* stands up and says loudly, 'Who cares about knowing a *masechta*?' Wow, after that whole build-up, he had created such a *rifyon*, he just destroyed the spirit I had worked so hard to create. With all the *geshmak* and confidence I have in this program, I remember feeling really deflated.

"But let me just tell you, many weeks later, when we got up to *daf zayin* in *Succah*, there were eight different views of the Tannaim on the topic of *diras kevah*. So I said to the class, 'Close your Gemaras and let's see who can tell us the eight *shitos*.' And that boy raised his hand and rattled them all off. The class got up and broke into a *tantz* right then and there — boy, did we make a *matzav*! Of course he had said, 'Who cares about knowing a *masechta*,' because at that point, in his mind, a *masechta* wasn't *geshmak*, so who wants to do something that's not *geshmak*? But when you really know it, when it's in your bones, it's *geshmak*."



In order to chazer, you need that self-sacrifice, how do we get someone to be moser nefesh for something whose sweetness he's never yet tasted?



Rabbi Menachem Feifer, who teaches 11th grade at Yeshiva Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, is one of the many *mesivta rebbeim* who've seen great success with V'haarev Na. "One student *chazered Megillah* three times over Shavuos, once the first night, once the second night and once over Shabbos, and all told, has finished it 40 times this year. A number of my boys have told me, 'Rebbi, I'm going to finish this *masechta* 101 times. Imagine — to dream of finishing a *masechta* 101 times, it's mind-boggling."

One boy, continues Rabbi Feifer, is a huge sports fanatic. "After the Super Bowl, he came back to yeshivah and couldn't stop talking about it, high-fiving everyone he saw. The next week, he ran a marathon in Miami for Chai Lifeline after training for months, and again he came back super-excited. Then we traveled to a Monsey yeshivah for our "*retzufos*" *sefer*, and for nearly three hours, this boy didn't pick his head up from the Gemara. When he finished, he told his *chavrusa*, 'These were the sweetest hours of my life.' I wanted to cry. I had seen how he looked after the Super Bowl and after the marathon, and yet this is what he said, not to me, but to his *chavrusa*. That's not a story you can make up."

Plowing Through The results speak for themselves, but the challenge is how to create the initial momentum: We all know that when we really want something, we're ready to be *moser nefesh*, the sky's the limit. "If a *bochur* wants, we're in business," says Rabbi Newman. "But how do we get *bochurim* to want?"

At the very beginning, before one has the Gemara down pat, *chazarah* requires lots of self-sacrifice. It means concentrating, and plowing through the *amud* over and over. In a way it's circular: In order to want, you need to feel the sweetness that comes from intense review. But in order to *chazer*, you need that self-sacrifice that only experiencing the *mesikus haTorah* makes possible. Simply put — how do we get someone to be *moser nefesh* for something

“V’haarev Na” a Huge Success at Mesivta Ateres Yakov

whose sweetness he’s never yet tasted?

Reb Dovid finds the answer in an unlikely source: the circus elephant. What keeps this two 2,000-pound behemoth in its cage, instead of barreling through the bars to freedom? All the trainer needs is a rope around its leg, while the other end is tied to a peg in the ground. The trainer first ties that rope to its leg when the elephant is still young, weighing a mere 200 pounds. The elephant tugs with all its strength and, finding it impossible to break free at that point, it gives up. The belief that he’s incapable of pulling out the pegs stays with that elephant for life. Yet when, 20 years ago, a major fire raged through a circus, the elephants panicked over the approaching flames, pulled out the pegs and stampeded off the grounds.

Most of us, Reb Dovid observes, believe that we have limited abilities. “If we, as *mechanchim*, pull out the pegs for our boys with *bechinot* or incentives, we do them no favor. Our job is to light the fire, to bring the ‘*aish haTorah*’ alive so that the students themselves will pull out those pegs, and only then will they stay out.”

Rabbi Zev Freundlich, *menahel* of Mesivta Shaarei Arazim, observes that V’haarev Na manages to achieve “one of the most difficult things to do in *chinuch* – to change a *bochur’s* self-perception. Through what this program reveals to a boy about himself and his capabilities, it gives a boy a new role model – none other than himself.” Small wonder, then, that Rabbi Yehuda Shick, *menahel* of Mesivta Yesodei Yisroel, refers to the program as accomplishing what the Kitzker Rebbe called the highest form of *techiyas hameisim* – bringing the *living* back to life.

Although the program focuses on quicker-paced learning, *mechanchim* say it helps the *bochur’s* success in his in-depth *iyun seder* as well. For the first time, boys know what it means to learn for an hour or two straight without distraction. And, Reb Dovid adds, “once they’ve tasted the *mesikus*, they want to take it to the next level. If you have a friend, you want to get to know him better, and if the Gemara has become your friend, you want to get to know it better, too. One *bochur* told me that having gone through *Succah* 20 times, his *oneg Shabbos* each week consists of going through one piece in the Steipler Gaon’s *Kehillos Yaakov* on *Succah*.”

Don’t Connect the Dots Early in his *chinuch* career, when Rabbi Newman decided to dispense with the *bechinot* that he felt were an easy yet counterproductive way to enforce discipline and produce grades, he knew he needed to fill the resulting void. And he has, with an atmosphere of abundant love, excitement and *chashivus haTorah*, giving *bochurim* that push to jump on their *rebbe’s* *chazarah* train.

Reb Dovid believes he needs to put as much effort into moving the boys’ hearts as he does in stimulating their minds. “I need to constantly be thinking: What can I do today to show the *bochurim* they’re important to me and that I care about them?”

One of his *talmidim* had learned in Eretz Yisrael and then enrolled

Have you heard about the “V’haarev Na” learning program? It encourages talmidim to engage in a huge amount of *chazarah* until they truly “own” a *masechta*. The program was highlighted in a *Mishpacha* magazine feature, which encouraged MAY senior Rebbe Rabbi Orlansky to implement it in our yeshiva.

Rabbi Orlansky solicited advice from the program creator, Rabbi Newman, as to how he could implement the program most successfully and with which *Masechta* the program would work best. He launched it at the start of the school year with great success, presenting each participant with a personalized cross pen/pencil with which to take notes in his *Gemara* and make it “his own”.

It’s now common to find Rabbi Orlansky’s talmidim learning late into the night, either in Yeshiva or somewhere else in the community. Stories have already emerged of *chavrusas* going for a late night jog and chazering over their *limud ba’al peh*, and talmidim being *makabel* on themselves to chazer their *limud* 100 times over *bein haz’manim*.

“It’s inspiring to everyone in the yeshiva,” commented Rabbi Mordechai Yaffe, *Menahel*, “Rabbi Orlansky has done amazing things with his shiur in the past, but this has exceeded them all.” “A lot has to do with the *geshmak* and energy Rabbi Orlansky expends for his shiur,” commented Rabbi Yossi Bennett, Assistant *Menahel*, “He gives over *lev v’nefesh* for his talmidim and they feel that. He’s always thinking about how he can improve and create an even better vibe. It’s clear he’s receiving *siyata d’shmaya* in doing it!”

Just last Tuesday evening, the shiur remained in Yeshiva after school for a 2 hour long “*retzifus seder*” in which all 24 talmidim learnt *b’hasmadah rabah* for 2 hours straight without looking up from their *Gemaras* even once! The evening began with *milchig* refreshments and ended with a *fleishig seudah* and *kumzits*. Rabbi Tzvi Soroka, joined the *seuda* to give *divrei chizuk*. This was in addition to the weekly *kiddushim* during which talmidim are *mekabel* their weekend *chazarah* schedule. One talmid predicted that they’ll soon be learning with such *hasmada* that they will be able to start with *fleishig’s* and have enough time to complete the *seder* with *milchig’s*!

Rabbi Orlansky proudly noted that “You need to see it to believe it. Talmidim are learning *b’hasmada rabah* like they have never done before and are loving every minute of it!”



“חאפינג אריין”

In Airport



In Camp



At Lunch Break



in college. “He told me, ‘Rebbi, I feel bad but I stopped *chazering Sotah* because I’m too dizzy to learn from a *sefer* while traveling to school in Manhattan. What should I do?’ I said, ‘Let me send you an MP3 player with *Maseches Sotah* on it.’ I sent it to his house and didn’t hear from him. On a frigid Friday night three weeks later, I’m learning in a shul next to my house in South Monsey and in walks this boy, who lives an hour’s walk away. I exclaimed, ‘What are you doing here?!’ He says, ‘I’m stuck on a Rashi in *Sotah*.’ I offered to bring him to my house for some hot tea and cholent, but he said he just couldn’t go to sleep until he had *pshat* in the Rashi. We learned for 15 minutes and he walked back home. Where does that come from? He knew that I cared.

“It’s a lot of little things: If a *bochur* leaves for the bathroom, I’ll continue writing in his Gemara for him so he won’t miss anything. If a boy isn’t there at the beginning of *shitur*, I’ll call him to find out where he is, and I won’t have to do it again that year because if he’s missing again, he’ll call me. I call parents as much as possible to give them *nachas*, and the boys will want to continue to live up to it.

“I take my own sons on a 24-hour overnight every summer. Why? No reason — we’re going, just like that. During the trip, I turn to my boys and I say, ‘What’s the *kabalah* for this year?’ One year it was *yehei Shmeih Rabba* with *kavanah*, one year it was to be *ma’avir sedra*, one year to make *asher yatzar* while standing still. Imagine if I had said at the beginning of the year, ‘Whoever does *yehei Shmeih Rabba*, whoever is *ma’avir sedra* the whole year, we’re going to go on an overnight’... there’d be no overnight.

“The point is to show genuine love and *not* connect the dots. The boys know what their fathers want, they know what their *rebbeim* want, and they’ll connect the dots on their own. If we connect the dots for them and say ‘if you do this, we’ll do that,’ we lose them. Our job is to find ways to show we care, we that we believe in them.”

Every Thursday, Rabbi Newman makes

a *kiddush* and the *bochurim* make commitments to how much each will *chazer* over Shabbos. One week, a *talmid* named Moishy said, “This Shabbos I can’t learn because I’m going camping and I won’t have electricity.” Reb Dovid went to Home Depot and bought a lantern for Moishy to take along. As it happened, the campsite had a generator and the lantern went unused; Moishy wanted to return the lantern to his *rebbei*, but Reb Dovid wouldn’t hear of it. That Purim, Monsey experienced a major blizzard and with it, a blackout. All was pitch-black — except for one home, where a *bochur* named Moishy sat and *chazered* that week’s Gemara by the light of a lantern.

Rabbi Newman has found that the best way to “start a *bochur’s* engine” is when a peer who’s been through V’Haarev Na can get up and say, “I was in your shoes and now, through *chazarah*, I’m loving and living Torah.” To that end, during the first part of the year, Reb Dovid calls up his alumni to deliver a 45-second message via speakerphone to his class, the gist of which is to put in the effort — because it’s worth it.

Once, says Rabbi Newman, the class called up a *bochur* learning in the Mir named Moshe Yehuda, as he was walking through Meah Shearim. Rabbi Newman told the class that his former student had *chazered Berachos* so many times he practically knew it by heart, but one of the boys didn’t believe it and went to get a Gemara. He opened it at random and asked Moshe Yehuda, “What’s on *daf lamed beis, amud beis*?” Moshe Yehuda didn’t miss a beat: “There are two dots in the middle of the *amud*, and the Gemara begins, ‘*Arba’ah devarim tzerichim chizuk* — Four things require ongoing *chizuk*, one of which is learning Torah.’ ” And, Moshe Yehuda added, “Is there a greater way to be *mechazeik* than through constant *chazarah*?”

“You can’t make stories like that one up,” Reb Dovid muses. And with his ever-growing record of success in turning a generation of *bochurim* on to Torah, he doesn’t have to. ●



Reading Between the Lines of Today's Media and Commentary

WE WANT IT TOO Every so often, an article appears in these pages that seems to strike a particularly resonant chord with readers. Based on the feedback that has streamed in, the story I merited to write about Rabbi Dovid Newman's V'Haarev Na program of Gemara learning for *yeshivah bochurim* is one such piece.

The hundreds of calls that came in following its appearance indicate that it addresses an issue close to the hearts of many. There were the *rebbeim* seeking to know how they can use the program to spur their *talmidim*, the many mothers who wanted to find out how their sons can be part of it, and the people who were simply moved and heartened to know that young men are discovering a sweetness in Torah they had never before truly experienced.

And when one hears a number of readers say they shed tears as they read it — beginning with the person who edited it for publication — that means it touched something deep. What's fascinating is that a number of women said they did so. Learning Torah is primarily a man's province, but feeling deeply connected to Torah, and wanting one's children to feel the same, is for all Jews.

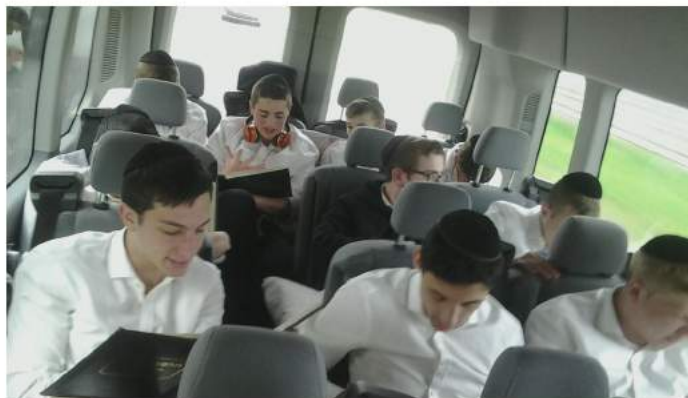
Like some of the best revolutionary ideas, Rabbi Newman's program doesn't really bring anything new into the world. Rather, it brilliantly reintroduces basic truths about Torah and about people that Chazal taught us long ago and that we also know intuitively to be true but somehow don't necessarily translate into practice.

One of these is the idea that conditional giving (i.e., if you perform X, I will give you Y), well-intentioned as it may be, creates pressure, and performance under pressure doesn't produce internalized, lasting growth. Unconditional giving to a young person, by contrast, communicates that we care for and believe in him, which enables him to tap into the desire for growth and achievement that already lies dormant in his *neshamah*, just waiting to be expressed. Or, as Rabbi Newman puts it, "don't connect the dots for your son/*talmid*. Just show him love; he knows what you really want for him, and he'll connect the dots on his own."

Rabbi Newman told me a story that brings this home so well, of a young man named Kevin who he meets around Monsey from time to time. He doesn't know much about Kevin, who is sometimes with a yarmulke and sometimes without one, but he always stops to say hello and chat.

Reb Dovid relates: "I asked him, 'Kevin, what's with tefillin?' He said, 'Tefillin? I did it when I was 13, but now hardly ever.' A few weeks later I met him again and said, 'Nu, Kevin, anything with tefillin?' He told me, 'Y'know, after we spoke last time, I put them in my trunk and once in a while, I take them out.' I said, 'Kevin, you can't keep 'em in the trunk in the summer, they'll be *passul*. I took out a hundred dollar bill and said, 'Just go to Lishkas Hasofer and have 'em checked out to see if they're kosher.'

"I called Lishkas to make sure he showed up; he did, and they were kosher. The next time I met Kevin and asked about tefillin,



he told me, 'I want you to know, ever since I checked them and found out they're kosher, I haven't yet missed a day.' Imagine if I would've said instead, 'Kevin, if you put on tefillin for two weeks, I'll give you a hundred bucks to check that they're kosher.' They'd still be in the trunk. I showed I cared; I care about his tefillin, I care about him."

My article described the incredible growth in Torah that a boy can experience through completely mastering even a few *blatt* of Gemara, let alone an entire *masechta*. But there's another aspect that I didn't focus on, which is what the feeling of mastery and accomplishment and the ensuing feelings of confidence and self-worth can do for a young man in regard to his personality and how he relates to others.

Feeling good about oneself can do wonders for feeling good about and hence getting along with others. One former *talmid* of Rabbi Newman wrote:

I have friends who were at times difficult and who weren't so much fun hanging around with. However, after going through the program, something in them changed. Perhaps it was their sense of accomplishment of owning a *masechta* or increased confidence in themselves, but these guys are now new people. They have a much more positive outlook on life and they seem more patient and relaxed in general. V'Haarev Na is truly a transformative program.

Once a *bochur* is able to break out of his "comfort zone" in regard to being able to sit and learn and do the many rounds of *chazarah* needed to "acquire" a *masechta* — "in his bones," as Reb Dovid likes to say — he now has the ability to transcend that zone in regard to other challenges too, such as refining his *middos* and appreciating *tefillah*. He tells of a mother who called him, distraught that her Eli wasn't going to *shul* on Shabbos and didn't even want to put on *bigdei Shabbos*.

Along came V'Haarev Na, and Eli poured his soul into being *koneh Maseches Sotah*, once getting out of bed in his pajamas at two a.m. because he had forgotten to review that day's *gemara* three times. Now, says Rabbi Newman, he davens "with fire," and began learning this *zman* at a top yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael. ●

“Anyone familiar with the current frightening statistics of boys falling through the cracks, knows that the one thing most of them have in common is that they did not feel success in their learning.”

It Really Works

[Rave Review / Issue 571]

I couldn't wait to get my hands on a copy of this past week's *Mishpacha*. I have been teaching high school *bochurim* for over 30 years and two years ago I became a chassid of Rabbi Dovid Newman. When I first learned about his program, I was not very impressed. Then when my friend and colleague Rabbi Menachem Feifer started the program, I couldn't get over his excitement. The stories of his *talmidim chazering* again and again just seemed too good to be true. When my *shiur* finished our *bekius masechta* in the middle of the year, we decided to try it. The result was startling.

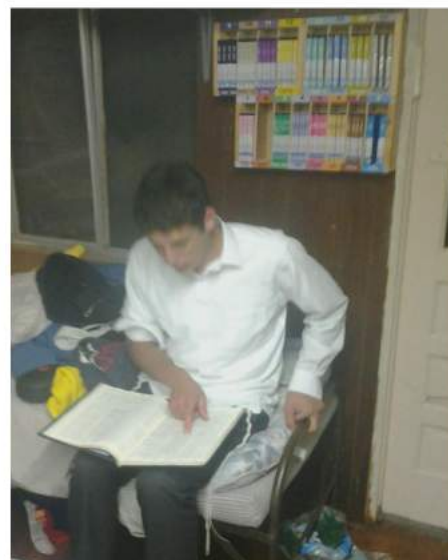
Boys who had previously shown little or no interest were writing translations into their Gemaras in order to *chazer*. Boys who were involved before went over the top! The *bochurim* from the other *shiurim* were surprised to see our *shiur chazering*, despite the fact that there would be no test. The *menahalim* were astonished.

I asked the boys in my *shiur* this past year to write letters to the boys who would be in my *shiur* in the coming year to advise them about the program. Sixteen of them responded. This is one short example:

This program is great for you. I never learned until I came to this class and started the program. In the beginning you may think that it's too hard but it's really not. If you try, you will love it and feel really accomplished. Give it a shot, it's really worth it.

The aspect that I feel cannot be overemphasized about Rabbi Newman and his program is the incredible love he feels for each and every *talmid*. It is as important to him for them to succeed as it would be for his own sons. The program is wonderful and it works, but the measure of the success will be in direct proportion to the degree of love that the *talmid* feels his *rebbe* feels for him.

Aaron Goldman
Yeshiva Darchei Torah
Far Rockaway, NY



Why Not for Every Boy?

[Rave Review / Issue 571]

The article about Rabbi Newman's phenomenal chazarah program was both heartwarming and heartbreaking. Yes, every boy can love to learn and thereby feel good about himself — which is the key to his future, no matter the path he takes. To watch the enthusiasm of average yeshivah boys feeling hatzlachah is a real breath of fresh air, especially in today's society where the mainstream yeshivah system only seems to recognize the “metzuyanim.”

Anyone familiar with the current frightening statistics of boys falling through the cracks knows that the one thing most of them have in common is that they did not feel any success in their learning and too often were put down by their peers and even *rebbeim*.

Shouldn't every boy be given a chance and be made to feel good about his own efforts? Maybe this learning program is not for everyone, but the underlying point — that feeling of “Yes, I can learn” or “I can do it” — is something that every rosh yeshivah, *rebbe*, *morah*, and teacher, starting from preschool all the way through high school and *beis medrash* can somehow bring into their curriculum, and together *b'ezras Hashem* make a revolution in Klal Yisrael.

Yosef Stern

A Life Changer

[Rave Review / Issue 571]

I was part of Rabbi Newman's V'haarev Na program and it was truly amazing. It was a life changer.

I look at Gemara differently now. Chazarah is a simple concept to understand but it takes a lot of time and effort and makes the Gemara enjoyable. There's no such thing as reading a gemara once without chazering it and then moving on. Reading a gemara once is almost as if you never learned it before. There's no way you can fully understand a gemara even on a basic level, much less remember it in the future without chazarah.

I hope everyone can chazer the gemara and be koneh many masechtos.

Moshe Eisen

When You Own It

[Rave Review / Issue 571]

Thank you for featuring the inspiring article on Rabbi Dovid Newman's V'haarev Na program.

His method of infusing his talmidim with the sweetness of Torah learning is no secret to me. Almost ten years ago, I chanced upon the same secret when I began learning Daf Hashovua (aka Daf-A-Week). By chazering each daf an average of five times before moving on, I too get to feel the Gemara "in der beiner." Coincidentally, one of Daf Hashovua's slogans is "Learn It. Review It. Own It." Rabbi Newman says, "When you own something, when it's part of you, there's no limit to what you'll do for it," and I have spent the last nine years sharing this idea with almost anyone I meet.

If only I had discovered his idea earlier, I would be slated to finish Shas in my 60s instead of my 80s, im yirtzeh Hashem. But as Rabbi Newman says, it's not quantity that we emphasize but quality and effort. This is a comfort to me as I continue my geshmake journey through Shas.

Balabatim who would like to experience this level of geshmak from their learning are welcome to join us at our siyum of Maseches Yoma in Passaic on September 20, and to start learning Maseches Succah the following week.

*Shimi Globman
Passaic, NJ*

I Watched It Happen

[Rave Review / Issue 571]

Kol Hakavod on an article so beautifully written by Eytan Kobre, depicting all the details of this wonderful program established by Rabbi Dovid Newman. I felt so strongly connected as I read the article that I felt a need to immediately respond with my heartfelt feelings.

My boys were baruch Hashem privileged to have Rabbi Newman as a rebbi in Yeshiva Shaarei Torah in Monsey. In the beginning, not every student feels he will be able to accomplish all the learning and chazering until he's ready to try it and stick to it. It takes lots of time, effort, and perseverance until they prove to themselves that they can truly accomplish so much through chazarah. The Torah grows with the boys.

Once they begin owning a masechta and doing chazarah every day, there is a transition in how the boys view themselves. They see they can achieve. They do the chazarah any time of day or night. It is an awareness and a commitment that they have made and strive to achieve.

It is all so sincere, real, and genuine. Once the flame of the love of Torah is ignited and burning, the boys are happy and excited to perform and learn with that special hislahavus, which has been ignited and instilled in the most loving and caring way by Rabbi Dovid Newman. He is the best role model for the boys and our nachas becomes his nachas.

I baruch Hashem have the zechus to watch this develop and emerge in my children. They have made siyumim in our home that became true family simchahs. It has affected our family in the most beautiful way with a true feeling of commitment to Torah. My husband and son learned a masechta together. It was a wonderful feeling and sight when they made a siyum together. Rabbi Newman is aware of the boys' accomplishments and loves to be updated with where they're holding.

Rabbi Newman, may you continue to reap nachas from your family and all of your talmidim.

*MHW
Monsey, NY*

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*“Not just for you
to go through a
masechta, rather
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*“It gives the boys
a new role model,
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is none other
than the bochur
himself!”*



Rabbi Shmuel Kamentsky Shlita
Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

I am very impressed with what **והערב נא** is accomplishing in the yeshiva world. It is bringing **השק** and **מתיקת התורה** to hundreds of bochurim. It makes them into real masmidim, sparking a desire to get even a deeper understanding of **תורה הקדושה**.



Rabbi Chaim Schwartz Shlita
Menahel Yeshiva Shaarei Torah
Monsey, New York

A few years back the yeshiva launched a new program headed by Rav Dovid Newman שליט"א, founder of **“והערב נא”**. The goal of **והערב נא** is not just to complete the **מסכת**, but to be **קונה** it - to know it cold with a huge amount of **chazara**. I am personally amazed to see the **התמדה** and literally hundreds of **blatt** chazered by the talmidim. This results in the bochurim feeling a strong **קשר** and love for **תורה**, which has a very positive effect on the **עיון סדר** as well. I constantly sense the **קנאת סופרים** of the younger bochurim towards this program. To be able to get every single bochur of the shiur so involved and enthusiastic without giving one **bechina** is truly amazing.



Rabbi Tzvi Mordechai Feldheim Shlita
Menahel Yeshiva Toras Chaim
Denver, Colorado

Rabbi Newman's program is a bolt of energy. Igniting a spark of enthusiasm where it is lacking, and excitement where it is desperately needed. It has created a dynamic atmosphere of learning, and has revitalized a class that has struggled to become motivated.



Rabbi Zev Freundlich Shlita
Rosh Yeshiva Shaarei Arazim
Monsey, NY

The most important aspect of Rabbi Newman's program is that it changes self perception of each of the bochurim. Changing one's self perception is one of the most difficult things to do in Chinuch. The **V'haarev na** program does just that. Another amazing concept is, it gives the boys a new role model, that role model is none other than the bochur himself!



Rabbi Yaakov Choueka Shlita
Menahel Mesivta Ohel Torah
Brooklyn, NY

I've been teaching **bekius** for many years. Unfortunately it was often the most dreadful time of the day for me and the bochurim. The seder was nap time for some bochurim, and many who were awake would just be looking at the clock to see what time it would finally end. As a rebbi giving it his all, this was very disappointing for me. This year we joined **“והערב נא”** and it literally made **תחיית המתים**. The bochurim now run to shiur! it has become from the most **“geshmake”** parts of the day. What a joy to see the **בחורים** chazering with such **השק**, knowing the **גמרא** **“in the bones”** We thank and wish R' Dovid much **הצלחה** to spread this program **בכל ערי ישראל**.

Rabbi Mordechai Wolmark Shlita

Rosh Yeshiva Shaarei Torah

Monsey, NY



The **הערב נא** and **קול תורה** that is generated through “**והערב נא**” has exhilarated and inspired the entire **מתיבתא**. One cannot help but be impressed and even awestruck by the sight of an entire shiur reviewing the many Blatt Gemara which they know so well, non-stop for hours at a time and often late at night. One of my personal highlights of the year is the annual farher where I get to see firsthand the way each bochur has mastered the entire **מסכת**. What a **נחת**!

Rabbi Yaakov Bender Shlita

Rosh Yeshiva Darchei Torah

Far Rockaway, NY



I feel a debt of gratitude for the **והערב נא** program, it has enhanced the **התמדה** of our **תלמידים**. We see them grow beyond expectation, constant **חזרה** has given them the opportunity to taste the sweetness of **תורה**.

Rabbi Shraga Soloveitchik Shlita

Menahel Breuers Yeshiva

Washington Heights, NY



Rabbi Newman has brought a revolution to our yeshivos. Mesivta bochurim are always encouraged to finish the large masechta being learned during the current year, but usually only the top masmidim finish the masechta. **והערב נא** focuses on **every** bochur, not just to finish, but to know a masechta, not just to go through a masechta, rather a masechta to go through you. It may be a smaller **מסכת** but the **אליה** that these bochurim have, isn't just for that **מסכת**. It opens up a door of **מתיקת התורה** and the realization of “**יגיעת ומצאת תאמין**”. This creates a great **אליה** in **רוחניות**, which lasts through **בין הזמנים** and **י"ט**.

Rabbi Eliezer Breitowitz Shlita

Rosh Yeshiva Darchei Torah

Toronto, Canada



I am writing to thank you and say **ישר כח** for all you have done to promote **חזרה** and a genuine sense of accomplishment in learning. Today we had a heavy snowstorm so a number of boys who live far from the Yeshiva were unable to come. I was in the Bais Medrash learning with my own chavrusa, but I could not take my eyes off the grade 12 boys chazering the 13 blatt they all know so clear. You are changing their lives in the most meaningful way.

Rabbi Mayer Neuberger Shlita

Rosh Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael

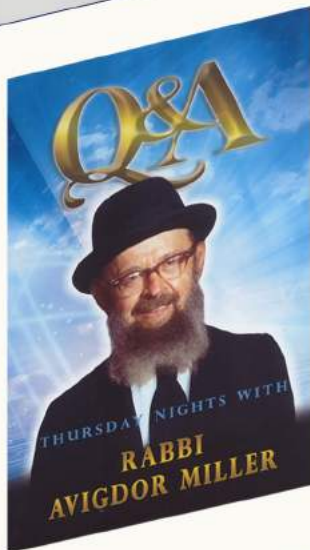
Atlanta, Georgia



Implementing the **והערב נא** program into our 11th grade curriculum has created a chain reaction of growth and produced amazing results. Boys who previously were unengaged during shiur are now totally focused. With their new-found confidence, they can then view multiple chazaros as a joy and not as an impossible chore. It brings a talmid to real fluency and mastery of large amounts of gemara, which in turn results in a talmid who now identifies himself as a bona fide ben Torah.

*“It is changing
their lives
in the most
meaningful
way!”*

*“To get every
bochur so
involved
without giving
one bechina...”*



Q:
Why do some bochurim daydream while learning?

A:
Nobody daydreams while eating Ice Cream!...
(Page 174)



"We just learned for 4 consecutive hours, chazering and getting a deeper understanding of the many blatt that we are so fluent with.
This tastes way better than Ice Cream!"

והערב נא
LEARN IT! - REVIEW IT! - LOVE IT! - OWN IT! - LIVE IT!

vhaarevna@gmail.com