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Nichum V'Nechamah: An Audiovisual Guide to the *Mitzvah* of *Nichum Aveilim*

Real comments overheard by those visiting *shivah* homes:

"You still have other children."

"Don't worry, you're young. You'll get remarried."

"At least he had a long life!"

Have you ever walked into a *shivah* house and been dismayed by what you are seeing or hearing? Perhaps other visitors are engaging in social chitchat or taking calls on their cell phones. Maybe they are offering platitudes, or, worse, criticism about the care afforded to the deceased. Or you yourself just don't know what to say to the *aveil* in the face of overwhelming tragedy.

This kind of tactlessness is so often not due to insensitivity, but rather, is the result of cluelessness – many are simply uneducated about the appropriate behavior and what should be said when performing the *mitzvah* of *nichum aveilim*. Others are just uncomfortable when paying a *shivah* call and let their feelings guide them to act or speak improperly.

Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah is constantly seeking to improve the provisions available for those who are grappling with the loss of a loved one. To this end, the organization has published the by-now well-recognized *Final Prayers* and *Prayers to be Said at a Grave* pamphlets. The



development of the organization's *nichum aveilim* DVD has taken this mission to the next step.

The idea for the DVD was sparked after Rabbi Moshe Haikins, Founder and President of Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah, was given a copy of a program by noted lecturer Rabbi Paysach Krohn about how to do the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* properly. Impressed by what he saw, Rabbi Haikins was determined to produce something of this nature about the *mitzvah* of *nichum aveilim*. Ultimately, Rabbi Haikins partnered with Rabbi

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Mr. Charlie Harary


Rabbi Benzion Klatzko


Dr. Norman Blumenthal


Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum


R' Aharon Margalit

A Truly Invaluable Prize: The Annual Torah Study Raffle



Almost two years ago, Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah launched its first Torah Study Raffle, which was met with great enthusiasm. The raffle is another way for Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah to make the merits of Torah study available to even more people. So it was that we were proud to make the raffle an annual opportunity. To date, the raffle has been drawn twice, and we look forward to doing so again this year.

The raffle, appropriately drawn shortly before *Zeman Matan Toraseinu*, the *yom tov* of Shavuos, offers participants the opportunity to attain their own personal kabbolas haTorah. The prizes in this drawing are truly unique: a grand prize, for the learning of the entire *Shas Gemara* in the winner's *zechus*; the first prize, for the learning of *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah* in the winner's *zechus*; and a second prize, for the learning of a *blatt* of Gemara a day for forty consecutive days in the winner's *zechus*. Alternatively, winners can choose to have the learning done *l'zecher nishmas* someone dear to them – and give the ultimate gift of eternal merit. Unlike typical raffles for items of material gain, participants in this program stand to win the greatest treasure and untold merit.

The raffle's first grand prize winner was Rabbi Yisroel Tenenbaum of Lakewood. Upon being informed right before Shavuos that he had won, Rabbi Tenenbaum told Rabbi Haikins, "You made my *yom tov*!"

Rabbi Tenenbaum chose to sponsor learning *l'zecher nishmas* his parents, and he held a *siyum* upon the completion of the learning two days after

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Rav Shmuel Kamentsky, *shlit"a*

Elchonon Zohn, Founder and President of the National Association of Chevra Kadisha (NASCK), in this endeavor. Rabbi Zohn offered valuable guidance and input as the project developed and helped make the connection to many of the professionals and rabbanim who were interviewed.

The DVD in its final form is entitled *Nichum V'Nechamah*: To Comfort and Be Comforted – A Guide to the *Mitzvah* of *Nichum Aveilim*. It includes both the dos and don'ts of *nichum aveilim*, as well as actual words and perspectives of *nichum* geared for people in different circumstances of *aveilus*. The program contains interviews with rabbis and professionals, as well as laypeople who have suffered a range of tragedies. For example, Mrs. Sherri Mandell talks about the death of her teenage son at the hands of Arab terrorists. Mr. Shmuel Greenbaum speaks about the loss of his wife in the Sbarro bombing in Jerusalem. R' Aharon Margalit, acclaimed author of the extraordinary autobiography *As Long as I Live*, speaks about the sudden loss of his newly-married son.

In addition, because each speaker gives his personal spin on the subject, the DVD appeals to a wide variety of people. Rabbi Benzion Shafier of "*The Shmuz*" fame, for example, speaks about "the dos" of *nichum aveilim*. Mr. Charlie Harary, Esq., describes what to focus on while speaking to *aveilim*. Rebbetzin Tehilla Jaeger speaks powerfully about *emunah*. Dr. David Pelcovitz shares a psychological perspective.


Rabbi Y. Y. Rubinstein


Rabbi Eytan Feiner


Rabbi Tzvi Hebel


Mr. Shmuel Greenbaum


Rabbi Jonathan Rietti


Rabbi Yaakov Klar


Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb


Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky


Rabbi Paysach Krohn


Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan


Rabbi Mordechai Willig



Pesach last year, which was the day of his mother's *yahrtzeit*. The *fleishig* buffet he arranged was attended by almost all of the *yungeleit* who had participated in the learning and was a truly meaningful event, drawing together the beneficiaries of the raffle in a beautiful way. Spirited dancing followed the actual *siyum*. Rabbi Tenenbaum graced the event with an emotional speech about the positive attributes of his parents, and a dear friend of his spoke as well. Those in attendance felt fortunate to be a part of a most meaningful evening.

Although the second year's grand prize winner was from a location outside of Lakewood, it was important to her that the *yungeleit* who had done the learning for the siyum be able to easily participate; as such, the *siyum* was held in a restaurant in Lakewood during the yom tov intersession in September of this past year. It was clear from the effort and expense that went into orchestrating the evening's program how greatly the winner valued this tremendous *zechus*. Again, the *siyum* was followed by dancing, and one of the *yungeleit* in attendance connected the week's *parshah* to the completion of the Talmud Bavli.

Although there are only three prize winners chosen each year, truly all participants, as sponsors of Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah's important work, walk away from this raffle as winners.

To find out more about The Torah Study Raffle or to purchase a ticket, contact Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah at 732-860-8747, or email CLMRaffle@gmail.com, or visit us at www.ChevrahLomdeiMishnah.org

The *rabbanim* who speak in the *halachic* highlights section also represent a diverse range. They include Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen, rav of Khal Ateres Yeshaya in Lakewood, NJ and a grandson of Rabbi Avigdor Miller; Rabbi Noach Isaac Oelbaum, the *chassidishe* rav of Kehillas Nachalas Yitzchok in Queens, NY; and Rabbi Eytan Feiner, rav of the White Shul in Far Rockaway, NY and in Camp Simcha, Chai Lifeline's summer program for children suffering from serious illness.

The project required a huge investment of time and effort – recruiting people to speak, arranging and attending each interview, editing and compiling the speeches – but all those who were involved felt strongly that their efforts were greatly justified. So many powerful speakers participated that the vision for the original project grew into far more than a single DVD. Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah is pleased to offer a multi-volume, unabridged version; a volume including the halachic guidelines of *nichum aveilim* together with highlights of the men speakers; and a separate DVD entitled *Woman to Woman: Heart to Heart*, with highlights of the women speakers.

Hopefully, the DVD will benefit *aveilim* doubly by preventing *ona'as devarim* by those paying a *shivah* call and giving specific *chizzuk* to the *aveilim*.

Nichum V'Nechamah: To Comfort and Be Comforted – A Guide to the *Mitzvah* of *Nichum Aveilim* is now available through the Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah office at 732-364-7029 or by visiting our new website, www.ChevrahLomdeiMishnah.org, where all versions are offered for viewing. Audio content can be downloaded in MP3 format free of charge.


Rabbi Noach Orlowek


Rabbi Yaakov Bender


Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier


Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen


Rabbi Yehuda Amsel


Rabbi Fishel Schachter


Rabbi Aryeh Sokoloff


Rabbi Yissocher Frand


Rabbi Moshe Tuvia Lieff


Rabbi Hershel Schachter


Dr. David Pelcovitz

Uplifting, Unusual and Uncanny Stories

Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah
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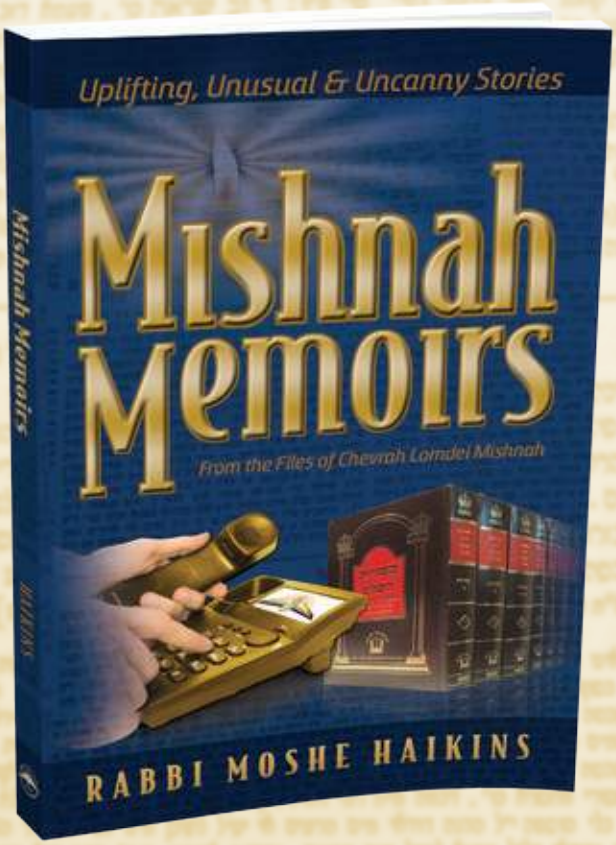
Mishnah Memoirs: The Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah Story

Meaningful, dedicated, productive, valuable – these are all words that aptly describe Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah and its work. Ask those working behind the scenes, and they will add one more description: fascinating!

"Since Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah's earliest days of providing basic Kaddish and Mishnah services," shares Rabbi Moshe Haikins, "I have been regularly amazed by the incredible twists and turns that come through our offices. Happy phone calls and emails, as well as sad ones. Interesting conversations and interesting people that I meet. Learning experiences – both interpersonal, as well as business ones. The list goes on and on."

When Rabbi Haikins would occasionally share some of these remarkable, uplifting and unusual occurrences with friends and colleagues, they would often tell him, "Write these stories down!" In the newly released *Mishnah Memoirs: Uplifting, Unusual and Uncanny Stories from the Files of Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah*, Rabbi Haikins has finally done it!

After close to a decade with Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah, Rabbi Haikins recently completed the monumental job of transcribing many of these experiences. In his trademark candid style, he brings readers into the making and inner workings of this unique organization. Readers will learn about the early years, when Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah is first established, and follow along as it evolves and grows and touches so many lives.



Along the way, readers will meet a varied and colorful cast of characters. There's Gustavo P., a Brazilian non-Jew who gains *chizzuk* from the Mishnah Times of Challenge Study program and makes a major life's decision with the help of Rabbi Haikins; Robin Meyerson, who helps save her uncle from cremation and sees tremendous blessing thereafter; Mrs. F., who finds a way to touch the life of Jonathon Pollard; the special Torah scholars who facilitate the learning done through Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah and realize great personal growth in the process. And this is just a taste.

In reading *Mishnah Memoirs*, you will learn that beyond the voice at the other end of the line, beyond the response to your email, beyond the myriad projects and endeavors, is a group of people and programs that are touching and changing countless lives.

Mishnah Memoirs is now available through the Chevrah Lomdei Mishnah office by calling 732-364-7029, or by emailing info@ChevrahLomdeiMishnah.org.