

## Midwest Enthusiastically Embraces Adopt-a-Kollel Novominsker Rebbe and Harav Levin Advocate for Adopt-a-Kollel

BY MATTISYAHU LAZER

"The beautiful thing about Adopt-a-Kollel," exclaimed Harav Avrohom Chaim Levin, *shlita*, *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Telshe Yeshiva of Chicago, "is that everyone can become part of it. Certainly, those who can should sign up for larger amounts, but even those with limited means can sign up and partner with *yungeleit* in Eretz Yisrael for as little as \$10 or even one dollar a month!"

Those were the warm words said by the senior *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Gadol* at this past week's Biennial Agudah Midwest Convention held at the Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale, Illinois.

Harav Levin's fervent appreciation of Adopt-a-Kollel came at a special meeting for Midwest Rabbanim where Adopt-a-Kollel made a compelling presentation to the numerous Rabbanim hailing from Chicago and many other cities across the Midwest.

Harav Levin's enthusiastic embrace of Adopt-a-Kollel began a week earlier when Harav Levin had been visiting Lakewood for a family *simchah*. Adopt-a-Kollel gave Harav Levin, together with Reb Yosef Knopf, one of Chicago's young, dynamic *askanim*, a personal tour of its corporate offices.

Harav Levin spoke with the Adopt-a-Kollel *askanim* and walked away deeply impressed by their professionalism and — perhaps even more — by their deep dedication and passion for the cause of ensuring that *yungeleit* in *kollelim* across the length and breadth of Eretz Yisrael, representing every conceivable segment of *chareidi* Jewry, should have food and clothing for their families.

Rabbi Yaakov Bernfeld, director of Adopt-a-Kollel, related that from the second he arrived at the Midwest Convention he was enveloped in a cocoon of combined warmth and tremendous energy on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. Reb Yosef Knopf immediately introduced him to a whole cadre of motivated *askanim* *Yshem Shamayim* who embraced him, as well as Adopt-a-Kollel's mission. "From the time of my arrival until my departure, I was treated as if I was an only guest. I could not help but be inspired by the passion and deep empathy displayed by the Midwest community for Adopt-a-Kollel."

"The attention to detail that they exhibited throughout the weekend and the seriousness and contagious enthusiasm that they bring to public service on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* was very moving. It is a tremendous *chizuk* for our Adopt-a-Kollel team to partner with others who carry a remarkable sense of *achrayus* for *Klal Yisrael* so unwaveringly."



The Novominsker Rebbe speaks at the Agudath Israel Midwest convention.



Harav Avrohom Chaim Levin addressing the audience at the Agudath Israel Midwest convention.



Rabbanim discuss Adopt-a-Kollel during a Friday morning meeting at the Agudath Israel Midwest convention.

### The Novominsker Rebbe: The Decimation, the Revival... and the Current Threat

The powerful *drashah* delivered by the Novominsker Rebbe, Harav Yaakov Perlow, *shlita*, on Shabbos morning riveted the audience, bringing home how important the Adopt-a-Kollel initiative is in the eyes of *Gedolei Yisrael*. In a remarkably personal speech, the Rebbe related how he himself had lived through both the destruction of Jewry and its extraordinary rebirth.

He described the double decimation of *Klal Yisrael* after the war and how the general feeling was one of *yiush* and depression. No one dreamed that yeshivos and chassidic courts could ever be rebuilt after such a *churban*. Hashem, however, in His infinite kindness enabled us not only to rebuild both here and in Eretz Yisrael, but the centers of Torah and *Chassidus* budded, blossomed and now flourish in ways that were absolutely unthinkable back then.

The terrible tragedy, however, is that this miraculous rejuvenation of Torah is now under threat in Eretz Yisrael. The Israeli government is terrified of the demographics of our growth and has thus enacted draconian legislation aimed specifically at the *chareidi* community.

The Novominsker Rebbe cried out, "We must believe that we, through our *limud haTorah* and *avodas Hashem*, are contributing to the security of Eretz Yisrael more than anything else! Every

*ehrtliche, from Yid* must understand that by engaging in Torah learning we are doing the biggest favor possible for the entire Eretz Yisrael!"

### Taking Action: 'L'maaseh'

The Rebbe then went on to hail Adopt-a-Kollel as the practical response that should be undertaken by all of Jewry outside of Eretz Yisrael. The Rebbe explained that Adopt-a-Kollel is a brilliant initiative for several reasons. First of all, it is something in which every Jew can participate, both those whom Hashem has blessed with ample means and those who are less affluent.

In addition, the idea that it is only trying to replace the government budget cuts makes the goal attainable. The Rebbe related how his shul in Boro Park had adopted a *kollel* whose size seemed to fit the number of members in his shul, but "*baruch Hashem* our *mispallelim* gave with such magnanimity that we were able to adopt a second *kollel*!"

The Rebbe went on to say that at the recent National Convention of Agudas Yisrael, there was a tremendous *hisorerus* to join Adopt-a-Kollel and thereby help our brethren in Eretz Yisrael who are under fire. He expressed his hopes that in Chicago and the greater Midwest a similar awakening would transpire.

"We are not here just to talk. This is something *l'maaseh* (that can be done)!" The Rebbe explained that Adopt-a-Kollel is

## \$4.5 Million in Security Equipment Funding for NYS Nonpublic Schools

In the aftermath of the terrible tragedy in the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, last year, the 2013-14 state budget provided a \$4.5-million appropriation for safety equipment for nonpublic schools across New York State under the New York State Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement (SAFE) Act.

As explained by Mrs. Deborah Zachai, Agudath Israel's Director of Education Affairs, the New York State Education Department has now begun rolling out the program. Under program guidelines, projects eligible for aid include the purchase and installation of internal security cameras, access control systems and door hardening items.

Nonpublic schools will be eligible to receive \$970 for each pupil in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 enrolled in the school as reported to the State

Education Department in the fall of 2012. The State Education Department will reimburse spending on approved projects that occurred on or after April 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014. Reimbursement will depend on the submission of clearly itemized receipts showing costs for the purchase and installation of items on the approved list of projects.

"Where the safety of schoolchildren is concerned, there should be no distinction between those who attend public schools and those who attend nonpublic schools," said Mrs. Zachai. "We are grateful that the Governor and the New York State Legislature recognized the need to provide funding for safety equipment in nonpublic schools and we are optimistic that the Legislature will continue to provide security funding in the years to come."

## Seudas Preidah for Devoted Servant of Klal Yisrael

Agudath Israel recently held a *seudas preidah* at its headquarters in honor of Rabbi David Seeve, director of Community Services. For close to 40 years, Rabbi Seeve helped thousands of people with initiatives ranging from housing to job training and placement. "It was truly a *zechus* to work for Agudas Yisrael, helping people all these years; but as

my father, *a"t*, did after his retirement, I am going back to *kollel* to learn Torah," Rabbi Seeve said.

Succeeding him will be Rabbi David Yosef Thaler. "Filling Rabbi Seeve's shoes is a tall order, but we are confident Rabbi Thaler will flourish in his new position," said Rabbi Chaim David Zwiebel, executive vice president of Agudath Israel.



Rabbi David Seeve at the *seudas preidah* (third from right).

not a project of Agudas Yisrael. Rather, it goes far beyond the parameters of Agudas Yisrael. Adopt-a-Kollel is something that encompasses all of *Klal Yisrael* but we, as members of the collective body of *Klal Yisrael* who care about the Jews in Eretz Yisrael, must unite and get involved.

### Midwest Rabbanim to Bring Adopt-a-Kollel to Their Shuls

Indeed, it was clear that the Rebbe's words, "This is something *l'maaseh*!" were being taken with the utmost earnestness by tens of Rabbanim from the entire Midwest, who were powerfully

impacted by Adopt-a-Kollel's presentation and undertook to bring the Adopt-a-Kollel initiative to their shuls.

In fact, as Shabbos arrived, several Rabbanim had been skeptical about taking on another project with their shuls. They felt that their shuls were already committed to many other things. After seeing what Adopt-a-Kollel was all about and hearing the opinion of the leading *Gedolei Yisrael*, they came away from Shabbos with a deep dedication to translate words of support for *Toras Eretz Yisrael* into action, *l'maaseh!*