

## Nationwide Agra D'Pirka Program in Baltimore Celebrates Its First Anniversary

MARGIE PENSAK

Just a year ago, as our nation celebrated Labor Day, men of all ages, stages, backgrounds, and walks of life celebrated and enthusiastically participated in the opening day of Agra D'Pirka in Baltimore. The organized, high-level Monday-Thursday morning *kollel* learning program, including a light breakfast, is geared towards local professionals, business owners, college students, retirees, or anyone who wishes to increase his morning *limud haTorah*.

However, Baltimore is no longer the “newest kid” on the Agra D'Pirka block, which includes the vast network of Agra D'Pirka locations: Kew Gardens Hills, Flatbush, Boro Park, Monsey, Lakewood, Miami, and Boston. Agra D'Pirka recently announced that it will further expand to include programs in Los Angeles and West Palm Beach.

This year's Labor Day Agra D'Pirka program in Baltimore, held on Monday, September 2, featured Rabbi Dovid Heber, Rav of Khal Ahavas Yisroel Tzemach Tzedek, which hosts the program.

In preparation for Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Heber, the author of *sefer Shaarei Zmanim* on the complexities of the Jewish calendar and time in Jewish law, discussed how the time of the *molad* (new moon) affects when Rosh Hashanah begins. He elaborated on the rules of the *molad* times, including “*lo adu rosh*,” that Rosh Hashanah can never occur on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday — even if the *molad* occurs on those days.

Making it especially relevant to this coming Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Heber indicated that this coming *molad* for Tishrei occurs on Sunday, but Rosh Hashanah is a day later to ensure that Hoshana Rabbah occurs on Sunday and not Shabbos so that we can properly fulfill the *mitzvah* of *aravos*.

Next, Rabbi Zvi Einstadter, *Maggid Shiur*, Yeshivas Ner Yisroel, addressed the *passuk* in the *parashah* of the week — “*lo sasur min hadavar... yamin u'smol*.” He elaborated on the Rambam that speaks about not deviating from what *Chazal* were *misaken*, and that anything that *Chazal* tell us we need to do turns into a *din* from the Torah. This makes everything the *chachamim* say into a level of *d'Oraisa*, of coming from the Torah. So, how can we be more lenient on things that are *mid'Rabbanan*, as opposed to a *mid'Oraisa*?

Rabbi Einstadter mentioned, for example, if a person is not sure if he recited *Birkas Hamazon*, a *brachah* that is *mid'Oraisa*, he does have to recite it, but if he is not sure



Rabbi Dovid Heber at the Baltimore Agra D'Pirka Labor Day program.

if he recited the *brachah Shehakol*, a *brachah* which is *mid'Rabbanan*, he does not have to say it. If every single *mid'Rabbanan* is on the same level as *mid'Oraisa*, according to *Chazal* — because of the *passuk* “*lo sasur*” — how can we be *meikil* on the latter? The Rav clarified that *Chazal* only instituted these *halachos* when there was no doubt that the *brachah* was mistakenly omitted.

While Baltimore participants were *shteiging*, another major Agra D'Pirka success was held at the FountainView shul in Monsey. Harav Eliezer Simcha Lief, *Rosh Yeshiva*, Yeshiva Gedola of South Monsey, discussed preparing for Elul. The Rav noted that *dveikus* in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* should be like a father-son relationship. He also explained the importance of having a Rav, or someone to give you *mussar* and to attach oneself to so as to learn from his way of conducting himself, in order to grow in *Yiddishkeit*.

Next, Rabbi Dovid Margareten, the *Maggid Shiur* of two Agra D'Pirka *shiurim* in Monsey, explained in depth the *halachos* of *shofar gezulah* and the various opinions regarding *avodah zarah*, as well as *teshuvah* and how to tackle the *yetzer hara*.

Meanwhile, in Flatbush, Rabbi Aharon Kahn, *Mara d'Asra*, Knesses Bais Avigdor, spoke about the Rambam's review on Torah in the context of making a living. Rabbi Moshe Scheinerman, *Mara d'Asra*, Bais Hamedrash Imrei Tzvi, spoke about the importance of coming close to Hashem during the special days of Elul. Subsequently, Rabbi Fishel Schachter, *Maggid Shiur*, Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, spoke about the need to make space for others. He explained that if you make space for others you are really making space for yourself. He emphasized how one has to see Hashem's *hashgachah* in everything that is experienced during the course of the year.

As one Baltimore participant rushed out the door



Rabbi Eliezer Simcha Lief at the Monsey Agra D'Pirka Labor Day program.

at the conclusion of the program, he mentioned, “It's a fantastic break in the middle of the day. The *shiurim* cover a wide spectrum of subjects, some of which no one will have ever learned before, and some of which no one will have had the knowledge to seek out the answers. That is one of the major attractions of Agra D'Pirka.”

Mr. Joey Pollak, a first-time Agra D'Pirka-Baltimore participant, shared, “I'm going to be 70 soon. Although, I am still working full-time as a CPA, one of my goals is to attend the Agra D'Pirka program, not just on legal holidays, but every morning, so I can start my day off with a *shiur* before going to work. My plan is not to retire, but I would like to participate more in this program.

“I got a double benefit today, listening to Rabbi Einstadter and Rav Heber,” continued Mr. Pollak. “I am signing up now for Agra D'Pirka and it was a great start today. I hope to participate in the program more as time goes on, but time will tell how much I will be able to accomplish — there are still demands with tax season, but I'm hoping that this is something that I can effectively pursue.”

Mr. Eli Sofer, coordinator of the Baltimore program, concluded, “Agra D'Pirka fills a void. People who cannot learn full-time can at least get a sprinkling. We are *zocheh* to hear the greatest *talmidei chachamim* in our community — including a wonderful *iyun shiur* given by Rabbi Yaakov Herskovitz — as well as world-famous speakers, on a daily basis. Anyone who hasn't yet tried Agra D'Pirka will never know how enjoyable it is until they try it.”

For information about the Baltimore program, contact Mr. Eli Sofer, 917-755-1572, or email [elicsofer@gmail.com](mailto:elicsofer@gmail.com). For more information about the Agra D'Pirka program in other locations, call Mr. Chaim Fuhrer, 718-677-1377 ext. 106, or email [cfuhrer@agradpirka.org](mailto:cfuhrer@agradpirka.org).

## Dor Yeshorim Does More for Your Family

Research and development is only one way Dor Yeshorim preserves generations.

Y. KOHN

Dor Yeshorim is a brand name. Its services have benefited hundreds of thousands of individuals across the globe. Its groundbreaking screening has pioneered, preserved, and protected tens of thousands of healthy families, resulting in priceless joy and boundless *Yiddishe nachas*.

As with all brand names, the behind-the-scenes reality is even more heartwarming and impressive. Medicine and health care is constantly evolving. Dor Yeshorim's cutting-edge, world-leading Institute of Research & Development keeps it ahead of the latest innovations — and indeed, often shapes them.

One such example is Spinal Muscular Atrophy. SMA

is a devastating, all-too-common genetic disease that attacks the body's muscles. SMA occurs across all ethnic groups and has no known cure. A fully reliable genetic test for SMA does not exist. Unscreened, people tragically discover that they are carriers in the hardest way possible, when it's too late to prevent the pain.

Dor Yeshorim's director of Research and Development is Dr. David Zeevi of the Translational Genomics Lab in the Medical Genetics Institute at Shaare Zedek Medical Center. “Dor Yeshorim is currently leading the global genetic industry in our research and development for a groundbreaking, highly reliable and comprehensive SMA testing method. We will not rest until we know that *Klal Yisrael* is protected from this horrifying disease.”



Dor Yeshorim endeavors to do to SMA what it has done to Tay Sachs: virtually eradicate it from within our midst. With Hashem's blessing and extensive work by Dor Yeshorim's top-of-the line Research and Development Department, a testing breakthrough is imminent.

Dor Yeshorim's mission and mandate is to pioneer, protect, and preserve our people, healthy generation after healthy generation.

Researching and developing current solutions for present, future, and eternal generations is one of many ways that Dor Yeshorim serves you and your family.