

Achdus Reigns Supreme at Pirchei Winter Events



The weather outside may be cold, but at Pirchei, winters are warmer than ever as several hundred Pirchei goers have discovered in recent weeks at Pirchei Shabbos Shel Achdus events held at several different locations. Rabbi Ephraim Levi, national director of Pirchei

Agudath Israel of America, and Rabbi Avi Silver, coordinator of the recent Mid-Atlantic Regional Shabbos Shel Achdus, shared their thoughts on two recent events that had youngsters enjoying a memorable Shabbos that was Pirchei Agudath Israel of America at its very best.

Sandy Eller: How many boys came to Philadelphia for the Mid-Atlantic Shabbos Shel Achdus?

Rabbi Avi Silver: We had 150 boys coming from Philadelphia, Scranton, Brooklyn, Washington Heights and Providence for Shabbos Parshas Yisro, with over 200 people for the meals.

SE: What kind of program did you have arranged?

RAS: On Friday we took the boys ice skating and then we had a hasmada learning program over Shabbos. We divided the boys up into groups and broke up all of Seder Moed between them so that Motzei Shabbos we were able to make a siyum on Seder Moed. Of course, we had singing, davening and intense learning all Shabbos long. The boys had an opportunity to earn raffle tickets for their learning and extra tickets for those who cleaned up the tables after every meal. They really did an amazing job.

SE: And Motzei Shabbos?

RAS: We had a melava malka, a siyum on Seder Moed and a Chinese auction where we also gave out special prizes to boys from each city for learning, ruach and middos. In addition to music and dancing, the boys heard Divrei Torah from Rav Sholom Kaminetzky and Rabbi Ephraim Levi. The siyum was l'iluy nishmas Aryeh Dunoff, who was very well known locally and instrumental in the success of Pirchei of Philadelphia.

SE: Did you see a sense of achdus developing between the boys of different cities?

RAS: Absolutely. The boys learned very well together and Scranton sent us a note thanking us for hosting them. The achdus that we see among the boys is the biggest reason we have this event.

Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim saw approximately 500 boys from 16 cities, including Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Columbus, Atlanta, Phoenix, Denver, Dallas and North Miami Beach sharing an incredible four days in Detroit for the Midwest Shabbos Shel Achdus.

Sandy Eller: What makes the Midwest Shabbos such a special event?

Rabbi Ephraim Levi: The boys start coming on Thursday night and, after Shachris and an inspiring D'var Torah from Rabbi Yehuda Bakst, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Gedolah Ateres Mordechai, we enjoyed a wonderful trip to the Joe Dumars Fieldhouse, a local entertainment complex. After lunch, the boys were divided up into groups of four, with local bochurim in charge of each mini bunk throughout the whole Shabbos. There is a real camp atmosphere and having an older bochur with them energizes and inspires the boys; we have had several adults tell us that they were tremendously strengthened in their yiddishkeit by their experiences during the Midwest event when they were boys. The truth is the event has gotten

so big with boys from so many different places that it is practically the coast to coast event by now.

SE: What is Shabbos like at the Shabbos Shel Achdus?

REL: It is an amazing experience. In addition to an unbelievable davening, beautiful zemiros and uplifting divrei Torah, all of the seudos are eaten together in a big gym. It is mamash a camp atmosphere. Also, we have a hasmada program running from Friday afternoon all through Shabbos. The more they learn, the more raffle tickets they earn.

SE: What happens with those raffle tickets?

REL: Motzei Shabbos we have a beautiful melava malka and boys use their raffle tickets for a Chinese Auction. The Siyum Mishnayos is an incredible moment for the boys, some of whom have learned a seder of Mishayos while others have completed all of Shisha Sidrei Mishna. The Midwest Shabbos Shel Achdus rotates between Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland each of which has a year-long hasmada contest and winners in each city get a Shas.

SE: It sounds like a memorable night for the boys.

REL: It certainly is. The melava malka itself is actually relatively short, maybe two hours. After that we clear the tables and the music starts and you have to see the dancing to believe it. It goes on until late into the night and it is so moving to see the bochurim dancing with the boys. The chizuk that our boys get from the bochurim is incredible and can have a significant impact on their lives for years to come.

SE: What do you see the boys taking out of this event?

REL: A weekend like this has a major impact on everyone. While the boys are here to have an enjoyable Shabbos, the ruchniyus is off the charts. We all davened together, ate together and enjoyed an inspiring Shabbos together, with

Pirchei Agudath Israel of America showing the boys the beauty of yiddishkeit, the beauty of Shabbos, the beauty of learning and the beauty of Torah. We have boys from all over the United States, from different backgrounds, getting together for one reason and one reason only: Limud HaTorah. People sometimes tell me that they were under the impression that Pirchei is fading away but all I can say is come experience a Shabbos like this and you will see just how vital, how alive and how inspirational Pirchei is and what a difference it makes in the lives of our boys.

(Author: Sandy Eller)