

K'ish Echad B'Leiv Echad, MetLife Stadium Erupts in Celebration of Torah

January 2, 2020



by Sandy Eller

If you closed your eyes and let the waves of kedushah wash over you, you could imagine that you were standing at Har Sinai at the exact moment when Klal Yisroel received the most precious gift in the world directly from Hashem. Far from its beginnings as a sporting venue, MetLife Stadium was transformed into a mikdash me'at, with men, women and children of all ages, representing every segment of the Jewish community, joining together to celebrate the completion of the 13th cycle of Daf Yomi.

The words of Rashi came to life in East Rutherford, New Jersey, as Jews from all over the world experienced The Siyum, k'ish echad b'leiv echad, as one soul with one heart. It was more than four hours of pure bliss for siyum-goers, the occasional drifting snowflake drifting and biting winds no match for the fire of Torah that burned brightly in the hearts of an audience 90,000 strong at MetLife Stadium. Hundreds of thousands more shared in the simchah at Barclays Center, at simultaneous events held worldwide and via livestream.

The Siyum was an epic display of kavod haTorah, the massive center stage

topped by a regal canopy, with gedolim and rabbonim seated in their places of honor on the dais. The program was packed with emotional moments, with the creme de la creme of the Torah world speaking passionately about limud Torah as the lifeblood of the Jewish nation that has sustained Klal Yisroel throughout history and the power of Daf Yomi as a force that brings every segment of the community together in every corner of the world. From the very first words of Mincha at the 1 PM start time until the very last amein at the end of Maariv, the program touched hearts and spanned the generations, a special siyum on mishnayos empowering the children of Masmidei HaSiyum to carry the torch of Torah forward into the future, while a tribute to the Holocaust survivors in attendance demonstrated that limud Torah is a bridge that links our past, our present and our future.

The Siyum theme of ki heim chayeinu came to life in several videos highlighting the importance of kvias itim l'Torah, with a tribute to ArtScroll founder Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz urging participants to utilize their own talents and abilities to change the world. Equally inspiring was the presentation of a World War II era gemara to Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky, Rosh HaYeshiva of Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia and Chaver Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah, the historic volume used to make the poignant siyum marking the conclusion of the final masechta of Shas.

Twenty minutes of exuberant singing and dancing followed the siyum, the entire stadium coming alive as those in the stands linked arms and swayed at their seats while those on the field level made their triumphant way across the floor. The sheer joy of the moment was transformative, the physical and spiritual elements of The Siyum blending seamlessly as the accomplishment of completing the 13th Daf Yomi cycle merged with the promise of the 14th cycle, touching hearts and inspiring souls. Equally powerful was the haschalas Shas by Rabbi Aharon Feldman, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel and Chaver Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, bringing Rabbi Meir Shapiro's dream to life once again with the beginning of the new Daf Yomi cycle.

The Siyum impacted participants on a variety of levels. Jeff Cohn of Baltimore made the three hour trip to East Rutherford five months after undergoing quadruple bypass surgery. Mr. Cohn, who has maintained a daily chavrusa

for more than thirty years, said that his trip to The Siyum was his first major outing since his hospitalization.

“This is the ultimate celebration of Torah and a display of our ultimate servitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, showing that our mission in life is to learn his Torah and live his Torah,” said Mr. Cohn. “Nothing was going to stop me from coming and it is a tremendous zechus to be here.”

Yossi Gleiberman of Flatbush gives two daf shiurim daily and is in the midst of his fifth journey through Daf Yomi. He came to MetLife Stadium with his wife Estie and his daughter Avigail, who came back from seminary in Israel just to celebrate The Siyum.

“Daf Yomi has always been part of my life and The Siyum is a family simchah,” said Miss Gleiberman. “It was impossible for me not to be here.”

While for many The Siyum marks the completion of a seven and a half year long journey through Shas, Mr. Gleiberman took a different view of the occasion.

“I can’t wait to get into the driver’s seat and start again,” observed Mr. Gleiberman. “We have to focus and enjoy every single day, every single daf and every opportunity we have for limud Torah.”

Those thoughts were echoed by Passaic resident Martin Bodek who was making his second siyum on Daf Yomi.

“The actual siyum is definitely a ‘wow’ moment, but starting the cycle again just moments later is very emotional,” said Mr. Bodek, whose grandfather completed Shas fourteen times in his lifetime. “For me, finishing Maseches Berachos is really special because it is your own Hadran coming true. When you finished Shas you vowed to come back again and you really did.”

Daf Yomi serves as a stabilizing force for Moshe Kinderlehrer of Teaneck.

“It is a reminder that I am still in the Torah word and keeps my learning sharp,” said Mr. Kinderlehrer. “I’m not just an Orthodox Jew; I’m an Orthodox Jew who learns Torah.”

Former NYPD officer Gene Stevens of Brooklyn was happy to return to MetLife Stadium for his second siyum, sitting in almost the same seat on the floor that he had occupied in 2012.

“What brings me here is the achdus that every Jew feels when they come together,” said Mr. Stevens. “Especially in light of what has been going on in recent times and all the craziness in the news, coming together and supporting each other is very special.”

For a group of public school students who were partaking in NCSY’s Yarchei Kallah program during their winter break, The Siyum was an opportunity to experience a sense of community in an unprecedented way. Chaperone Yael Cohnen of Monsey said that while the girls she brought didn’t understand all of the speeches, they walked away from The Siyum moved by the experience.

“Just seeing the sheer number of Jews in one place really put them in a place of awe,” said Miss Cohnen. “Some of them come from very small Jewish communities where they count heads for minyan every week and here thousands and thousands of Jews were together in one place. They got to be part of the largest Jewish gathering in the world, and that really made an impact on them.”

Holocaust survivor Naftali Faska, whose childhood home was located across the street from the Agudah shul in Bendzin, Poland, tuned in to The Siyum from afar. Knowing that his grandson was being misayem Daf Yomi and that his great grandsons were part of Masmidei HaSiyum was yet another example that the mesorah that had been passed down to him by his parents was continuing on in the next generation.

“I never imagined that I would see a celebration of Torah like this in my lifetime,” said Mr. Faska. “After the war, your whole life was about your family and carrying on the way of life you had back home. To see dor yesharim being raised in the proper derech is something that brings tears to your eyes and gives you hope for the future.”

The Siyum was a family affair for Shimmy Atlas of Chicago, whose wife persuaded him to start doing the daf after the 2012 siyum. Mr. Atlas made

every siyum of the 13th Daf Yomi cycle with his family, often at the Shabbos table, and his children know the words of the Hadran by heart, typically repeating them along with him. Mr. Atlas credits his wife for his being able to come to The Siyum as a misayem, an experience that he will carry in his heart in the months and years ahead as he begins his second Daf Yomi cycle.

“Answering “Amein yehei shmei rabba,” Kedushah, and singing and dancing at a siyum with over 90,000 people is like a jolt of electricity shooting through your body and experiencing it while dancing with my boys was an experience I can’t even describe,” said Mr. Atlas. “My six year old son summed up how amazing it was by telling me as we walked from our seats after Maariv, ‘It was very good today – I want to learn Daf Yomi.’”



Crowd View of the 13th Siyum Hashas of Daf Yomi



The 13th Global Siyum HaShas of Daf Yomi begins with Mincha, the afternoon prayer service.



Rabbi Yaakov Perlow,



Novominsker Rebbe and Rosh
Agudas Yisroel, Welcoming the
Attendees



Rabbi Aryeh Malkiel Kotler, Rosh
HaYeshiva, Beis Medrash
Govoha, Chaver Moetzes Gedolei
HaTorah, Offering Divrei
B'rachah

Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel,
Executive Vice President of
Agudath Israel of America
Delivering Welcome Remarks



Rabbi Yissocher Frand, Rosh
Yeshiva, Yeshivas Ner Yisroel
Baltimore, Addressing the Crowd



Rabbi Aaron Schiff, Chief Rabbi
of the Ultra-Orthodox community
in Antwerp and a former Rosh
Yeshiva (dean) of Antwerp's Belz
school, addressing The Siyum
attendees in Yiddish.



Rabbi Uren Reich, Rosh
HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Ohr Zecharia
Woodlake, Addressing the Crowd



Rabbi Yoel Gold Shares “A Siyum Moment”



Rabbi Nosson Scherman, General Editor of ArtScroll/Mesorah Publications, making a Siyum on all six tractates of Mishna, the culmination of many months of study by over 30,000 child members of the Masmidei HaSiyum initiative at The Siyum.



Mr. Jay Schottenstein, who dedicated the 73 volumes of the ArtScroll Talmud in memory of his father, Mr. Jerome Schottenstein, reciting the Kadish prayer marking the end of the 13th Daf Yomi cycle at The Siyum.



Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky, co-founder and Rosh Yeshiva (dean) of the Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia and a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel of America, reciting the final passages of Shas from a Holocaust era Talmud, marking the historic culmination of the 13th Daf Yomi

cycle at The Siyum.



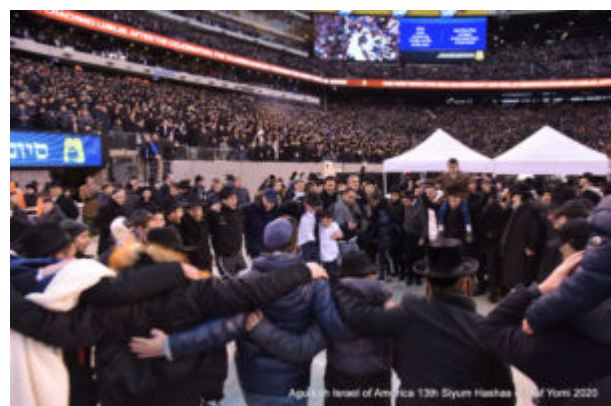
Moments after the triumphant conclusion of the 2,711 page-long Daf Yomi cycle, Rabbi Aharon Feldman, Rosh Yeshiva (dean) of Baltimore's Ner Israel Rabbinical College and a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah (Council of Torah Sages) of Agudath Israel of America, starts the Talmud anew at The Siyum.



Rabbi Eliezer Ginsburg, Rosh Kollel, Mir Yeshiva, Brooklyn; Rav, Agudas Yisroel Zichron Shmuel, Leading the Crowd in Maariv



The Dais



Dancing



Dancing



Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetsky
Dancing During the Siyum
Celebration



Assemblymember Simcha
Eichenstein, dancing during the
celebration



Attendees Conversing at the 13th
Siyum Hashas of Daf Yomi



Holocaust Survivor Blesses
Young Siyum Attendee



New Jersey Governor Phil
Murphy at the Siyum



Young Participants in the Siyum Hashas Celebration



Partial View of the Crowd