

Certificates Awarded At Chag HaSemichah

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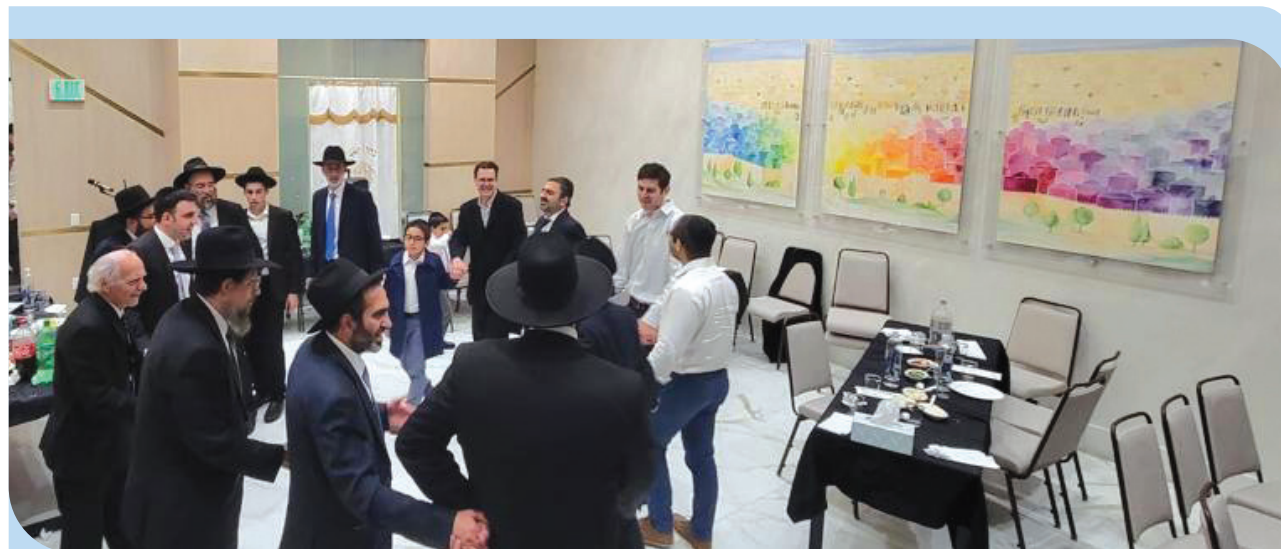
On March 21, the LINK Kollel hosted a Chag HaSemichah, in which *semichah* certificates were awarded to nine *baalei batim* from two separate *Halachah* learning programs of Yeshiva Iyun Halacha, which is based in Yerushalayim. The program consisted of structured, printed sourced materials authored by the yeshivah's Dean, Rabbi Aharon Shenkolewski, as well as in-person instruction in Los Angeles by Rabbis Mordechai Lebhar of LINK and Dovid Revah of Congregation Adas Torah.

In addition, the *musmachim* learned from the original sources in the *Shulchan Aruch* and its commentaries *b'chavrusa*. Seven graduates learned *Hilchos Shabbos* in-depth (including from the *Mishnah Berurah* and responsa from contemporary *poskim*) under the tutelage of Rabbi Lebhar, and two participants received *semichah* in *Issur V'Heter* under the direction of Rabbi Revah. All the *lomdim* were tested by written exams devised by Rabbi Shenkolewski, who flew in from Yerushalayim to personally award the *semichah* certificates.

In his remarks, Rabbi Lebhar raised the question of why *baalei batim* should learn for *semichah* and not just learn “*lishmah*” (without quizzes, exams, etc.). He answered by referencing the goals in learning that many *Gedolim* set for themselves, as exemplified by Hagaon Harav Chaim Kanievsky, *zt”l*. This system of setting a goal for oneself compels a person to expend more effort than he would normally feel he is capable of mustering as he marshals his fortitude and determination to accomplish these goals.

In his own remarks, Rabbi Revah answered the same question by referencing a passage in the sefer *Nefesh HaChaim*. In it, Harav Chaim Volozhiner, *zt”l*, posits that when a person makes a commitment to a *davar sheb'kedushah*, he merits to be surrounded by an “*avirah of kedushah*.” The bubble of *kedushah* remains with the person until he completes it, while at the same time giving him the extra energy to be up to the task.

Rabbi Revah further explored the question by asking what practical benefit accrues to the recipient of *semichah* if he is not pursuing a rabbinic career. He offered two answers. First, the *semichah* award



Dancing at the Chag HaSemichah at the LINK Kollel.



At the Chag HaSemichah (L-R): Rabbi Mordechai Lebhar; *semichah* recipient Reb Dan Farzadfar (speaking), Rabbi Dovid Revah and Rabbi Aharon Shenkolewski.

enables a person to tangibly feel a sense of accomplishment, which in turn gives him the confidence to pursue further goals in learning. Secondly, those who have achieved this goal in turn serve as role models for others to follow suit.

Rabbi Asher Brander, the Dean of LINK, highlighted the importance of learning *Hilchos Shabbos*. The more one studies these *halachos*, the deeper is the appreciation of the transcendent importance of Shabbos. He encouraged the graduates to feel pride in their accomplishment and to keep reviewing their learning for a yet deeper understanding of the subject matter.

He praised Rabbi Lebhar for his leadership and motivational skills with his *talmidim* and thanked

Rabbi Schenkolewski for facilitating this learning revolution in Los Angeles.

In his own remarks, Rabbi Schenkolewski connected the *petirah* of Harav Kanievsky to this auspicious occasion. We learn from Rav Chaim, he averred, the importance of not wasting a moment from learning and how those intervals of time could add up to a great accomplishment.

He cautioned, though, that achieving such a goal in learning should not adversely affect one's humility or performance of acts of *chessed*. He charged the graduates with the imperative to keep on learning in-depth and to constantly review what they've already mastered.

Each of the recipients addressed the event and spoke poignantly of their years of struggle and accomplishment, while thanking those in attendance — their wives, children, *chavrusos* and other members of the *chaburah* — for their encouragement. They recalled their perseverance — including during the difficult days of COVID — as they balanced their professional and family obligations with their rigorous learning schedules.

Many noted that the *semichah* exams were more challenging than those that they had taken in their professional careers. They praised Rabbi Schenkolewski for his patience and thanked him for the clarity of his notes in helping navigate the *halachos*.