



RABBI YAAKOV RESNICK

AS TOLD TO MRS. RACHEL STEIN

Dial-a-Rebbi or Rebbetzin:

Just a Phone Call Away

What is Dial-a-Rebbi? Who created it, and what purpose does it serve? Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Resnick and Rabbi Yitzchok Goldsmith give us a glimpse of a groundbreaking initiative that has produced far-reaching effects in a relatively short span of time, and its influence continues to spread each day. Starting from a young age, children have an inborn drive to succeed. But sometimes, they face academic struggles, and scholastic achievement becomes a challenge. A child spends most of his waking hours in school. If school becomes his nemesis, what will that do to his self-esteem, and where can he turn for help?

Rabbi Resnick, a rebbi in the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, took note of this issue and felt moved to respond.

"I attended the yeshiva of the Novominsker Rebbe," Rabbi Resnick says. "And one of the Rebbe's ideals was helping Klal Yisroel."

In time, Rabbi Resnick came up with a plan that changed the lives of many children across the United States. Meanwhile, he continued to learn and grow during his years in Eretz Yisroel and Lakewood. When he transitioned to the kollel of the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, he accepted a position as a rebbi in the day school. The seeds of his mission began to sprout.

A certain boy began calling him with various questions in learning. His father wasn't available, and his mother didn't have answers for him. This situation ignited Rabbi Resnick's dream of helping boys who needed extra support.

In addition to maintaining his regular schedule, Rabbi Resnick began learning with several boys. As time passed, he realized that many boys needed extra mentoring. So, how could he help? Success Tutoring was his response, a platform that matches boys with older chevrusas. Rabbi Resnick created the agency five years ago and was astounded by the positive results it generated. As the program gained momentum, it became clear to him that numerous boys did not have someone to learn with them at night. Not only that, but tutoring was expensive, and many parents could not afford the additional expenditure. Rabbi Resnick began to dream again. Wouldn't it be great if students could dial a free hotline and get help from a rebbi on call?

Approaching Mr. Gavi Septon, a local baalebos, Rabbi Resnick presented his vision. Dial-a-Rebbi would be designed to help boys with any questions they have in limudei kodesh topics, including Gemara, Rashi, Tosafos, Mishnayos, Tanach, Halacha, Machshava, Klalli, and Teitsh. Enamored by the idea, Mr. Septon helped push it forward and continues to offer support and encouragement. In 2021,

Rabbi Resnick founded the hotline, and it is endorsed by Torah Umesorah and many leading mechanchim and rabbanim. At one point, Rabbi Resnick attended a Torah Umesorah conference for principals. Many menahelim then brought Dial-a-Rebbi home to their cities, greatly expanding its sphere of influence.

Rabbi Resnick planned to name the initiative after the Novominsker Rebbe. But tragedy struck, and a young boy from Cleveland who had learned with Rabbi Resnick passed away in the Denver yeshiva. Rabbi Resnick lovingly dedicated Dial-a-Rebbi l'ilui nishmaso.

Dial-a-Rebbi began fielding an increasing volume of calls, and more assistance was needed for the program's continued success. Rabbi Resnick reached out to Rabbi Yitzchok Goldsmith, a gifted rebbi in Cleveland, and hired him as Director of Development.

"I've been involved in tutoring and learning with bochurim for years," Rabbi Goldsmith says. "I have always liked the idea of trying to find creative, innovative ways to help children and adults learn Torah. Dial-a-Rebbi presented an amazing opportunity for me to channel my passion for chinuch and harbotzas Torah."

As Dial-a-Rebbi gained popularity, a woman called and asked, "Can we offer this service to girls?" Without hesitation, Rabbi Resnick hired several esteemed rebbetzins and an excellent high school mechaneches, and a girls' hotline was created. The family of a talmidah of Rabbi Zecharya Wallerstein, zt"l, sponsored the hotline l'ilui nishmaso.

"It's a learning curve," Rabbi Resnick quips. "The boys started with a focus on learning, and now they are looking for hashkafa. We hired Rabbi Yechiel Elbaz, a big mumcheh in Lakewood, for guidance in this area. Conversely, the girls started with hashkafa and have transitioned into learning."

From the beginning, Dial-a-Rebbi had rebbeim who are capable of answering in Yiddish. However, some of the Yiddish-speaking chevra preferred a completely Yiddish line, and Dial-a-Rebbi recently accommodated that request.

Rav Baruch Hirschfeld, world-renowned posek, Mara D'asra, and rosh kollel of Kollel Ateres Chaim Baruch, Torah Life Institute in Cleveland Heights, serves as the rabbinic advisor for Dial-a-Rebbi. Rav Hirschfeld helps

with screening the rebbeim on staff and is also available to answer questions on the hotline.

Some nights, the hotline receives up to eighty calls. One rebbi noted that seven children called in one night with the exact same question! Their rebbi had offered an incentive if they could answer his question, and the phone lines were kept busy that evening.

Rabbi Goldsmith sends out a weekly email depicting interesting questions that have come in during the week. "And," he adds with a smile, "there is an option for boys to order a Dial-a-Rebbi magnet. This way, they have the number on hand."

Helping children with homework and learning is a significant accomplishment. Recently, however, the Dial-a-Rebbi staff discovered that the hotline is more than beneficial; it is life-changing. A message came in from a woman who shared her story. Through her tears, she explained that she is a single mother struggling to raise her children. "Many chesed organizations give food and clothing," she said, "but there has never been anyone to learn with my son. Through Dial-a-Rebbi, my son has established a kesher with a rebbi and learns with him every night. This has changed his life."

Another time, a woman called with a halachic shayla. Her query led the rov to avail her of resources and support that alleviated her overall situation. Dial-a-

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Rebbi was instituted to help children who struggle in learning. But another equally important need is being met. “There are children who ask good questions, and they get encouragement from being acknowledged,” Rabbi Goldsmith explains. For that reason, rebbeim endorse the child before answering his question. It is not easy for a child to pick up the phone, and he deserves encouragement for taking that step. When a rebbi says, “You know, that’s a great question!”, a child’s confidence soars, and the stage is set for a positive experience.

Five thousand new people have called in during the year and a half that Dial-a-Rebbi has been around, with a grand total of 15,000 calls since its incipience. Some children plan their calls during the slot of a specific rebbi since they have established a keshar over time.

Dial-a-Rebbi continues to progress, always on the lookout to advance its services. Currently, the hotline hours are from 6:30 p.m.- 9:30 p.m. for boys, and from 9:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m. for girls. They hope to hire more staff who will be available throughout the day, especially during bein hasedarim, bein hazemanim, and school vacations.

Bookmarks are in the planning for distribution in schools. One side of the bookmark will have the number of Dial-a-Rebbi, and the other side will have some special thoughts to keep in mind before learning Torah.

Another goal is to hire more staff so that even if a child needs ten to fifteen minutes of chazara, that option will be available.

Currently serving the East Coast, Dial-a-Rebbi aims to serve the West Coast and countries around the world. They hope to provide tutorials in any language and in any time zone, making their invaluable assistance accessible to anyone.

“Dial-a-Rebbi is creating ripples of harbotzas Torah that keep spreading,” Rabbi Goldsmith says, “for children and adults. It’s a zechus to be part of such a wonderful organization.”

“I feel like siyata diShmaya is guiding us,” Rabbi Resnick concludes. “Initially, I arranged a certain outlay of funds. When that revenue was about to dry up, I thought the project might have to end. As one last effort, I sent out an email blast. Amazingly, someone offered to take care of the organization from that time on. The timing was orchestrated so perfectly. Hashem obviously wants Dial-a-Rebbi to be around!”

Dial-a-Rebbi is just a phone call away. With continued siyata diShmaya, your children can also enjoy the opportunity to taste the sweetness of Torah.

Boys: 845-Q4-Rebbi (845-747-3224)

Girls: 845-82-GIRLS (845-824-4757)

To connect your community, school, and rebbeim with Dial-a-Rebbi, find out about new initiatives, or join the team, email dialarebbi@gmail.com or call 516-582-2026/216-360-7086. **H**

Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Resnick grew up in Far Rockaway and attended the yeshiva of the Novominsker Rebbe. His strong keshar with the Novominsker Rebbe and Rav Shalom Schechter greatly impacted his derech hachaim and his desire to work for the klal. Currently, Rabbi Resnick works as a rebbi in the Hebrew Academy of Cleveland and is the founder and director of Dial-a-Rebbi. His dream is for Dial-a-Rebbi to be available 24/6 around the world, and that adults should be able to get chevrusas by utilizing the hotline.