

Rabbi YY Jacobson Captivates Sold-Out Crowd At Emet Couples' Event

By Josh Margulies

On Sunday, April 29, Emet Outreach held a world-class couples' event with delicious cuisine, a capella music, fantastic wine (provided by HaKerem), and an uplifting social atmosphere. Yet the most memorable part of the evening was an inspirational, brilliant, insightful lecture by Rabbi YY Jacobson, one of the most talented, dynamic, and popular speakers in the Jewish world today.

The sold-out event at the Bukharian Center of Jamaica Estates was jam-packed with over 240 guests, and many more were turned away. It was streamed on TorahAnytime.com's homepage, where an additional 3,000 people watched live.

The topic was "How to Like the People you Love." Rabbi Jacobson was sharp, funny, and inspiring as he discussed common marriage struggles with immense candor. He provided insights into the psychology behind great relationships, and gave illustrative stories and examples. The crowd was captivated for nearly an hour, and roared with laughter throughout the evening.

Emet's directors decided to invite Rabbi Jacobson to send a powerful message to their couples and alumni. "It's our responsibility to help our over 500 Emet couples and thousands of alumni continuously strengthen their commitment to Judaism and develop their relationships," said co-founder Rabbi Akiva Rutenberg. He added, "It took a lot of work to make this happen, but it's well worth it, to show our students how devoted we are to their growth and success."

Before the lecture, Rabbi Rutenberg shared an update with the crowd about Emet's recent highlights and events. He

mentioned that three separate Emet Shabbatons took place that past Shabbos, and the organization's programming on five campuses continues to grow and thrive. He expressed his heartfelt appreciation to Emet's ten talented and dynamic full-time *m'karvim* and *m'karvos*, and introduced the newest team member, Administrator Rabbi Hersh Goldberger, a *musmach* of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim.

Rabbi Rutenberg thanked the generous donors and sponsors in attendance,



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Rabbi YY Jacobson

and singled out the Lena and Richard Harris Foundation as true partners in Emet's work. He mentioned that one sponsoring family that was in attendance but chose to remain anonymous told him that their grandfather, whom the event was dedicated to, was a "man of *chesed* and truth." The event was also dedicated in memory of *Ben-Z'kunim ben Tamara*.

Should Marriage Be Pleasant?

Rabbi Jacobson began his speech by quoting the famous *pasuk*, "*Hinei mah tov*



u'mah na'im," which means, "Behold how good and how pleasant." He pointed out that "good" and "pleasant" often do not co-exist. He asked if marriage is supposed to be good or pleasant.

Rabbi Jacobson then posed another question. We mourn the loss of Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 *talmidim* during *S'firas HaOmer*, who died because they did not treat each other with the respect expected of such great students. We know that Rabbi Akiva taught that the most important principle in the Torah is "*V'ahavta L'rei'acha Kamocha*" – we must love our neighbor as we love ourselves. How is it possible that the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva did not treat each other properly when their *rebbe* embodied the concept of loving one's fellow Jew?

Rabbi Jacobson explained, in the name of the *Shem MiShmuel* that the two concepts, love and respect, are actually very different, and nearly opposites. Love comes from being "one" with a person. Respect on the other hand comes from contrast. When we recognize and cherish each other's differences, we build respect for each other.

Rabbi Akiva emphasized love, and his students followed in his footsteps. However, respect comes from the *midah* of appreciating each other's differences and contrasts. Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim*, on their level, fell short in that area, which resulted in their tragic demise.

Resolving Disagreements

Rabbi Jacobson said that very often the differences in a marriage come from each spouse seeing a subjective viewpoint. To illustrate this, he told the true story of a woman who had a bad relationship with her father. He was a chronic complainer, and no matter how hard she tried, she could never seem to please him. Toward the end of her father's life, the woman de-

cided that she would try one more time to bond with him, and invited him on a road trip.

She was driving, with her father in the passenger seat, and commented to her father about how beautiful the area was, and her father responded by saying, "How can you think this ugly area is beautiful? This place is grotesque."

Seeing that even in this gorgeous location her father could not help but complain, the woman felt completely dejected. She closed up, and virtually gave up on any hope of bonding with her father.

Thirty years later, the same woman was driving with her husband, and the area looked familiar. She remembered that they were in the exact spot she'd driven through with her father 30 years earlier, only this time she was in the passenger seat. She was shocked to see that from her father's seat, there was a cesspool that was not visible from the driver's seat she'd been sitting in 30 years earlier.

Needless to say, she felt terribly guilty. Her father was not being negative. He simply saw a different set of facts. Rabbi Jacobson explained that, often, both spouses are being honest even when they disagree, because they have different perspectives.

In closing, Rabbi Jacobson related a powerful story about two children during the Holocaust who were separated from their parents and brought to a death camp. While on the train, the 15-year-old sister tried to protect her eight-year-old brother. Then she noticed he'd lost one of his shoes. Frightened and lonely, the stress became unbearable, and she lashed out at her brother for being careless. Although her actions were quite understandable, she ended up regretting that conversation for the rest of her life. When they arrived at the

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Magen Presents Innovative Training Program In KGH To Parents Of Children Entering Adolescence

On Sunday evening, April 29, Magen New York, in partnership with Amudim and Chazaq, presented a riveting, comprehensive program for parents at the Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills. "Talking to our Youth about Puberty and Mature Relationships" featured *divrei brachah* by Rabbi Herschel Welcher, followed by presentations by Dr. Shloimie Zimmerman and Dr. Naomi Press. This was the first event organized and conducted as a partnership of these three vital Queens organizations – to the benefit of our Jewish community.

Judging from the enthusiastic comments and multiple expressions of thanks from participants, this program truly responded to a need felt in our community. "I'm so grateful that you explained how to educate my children in this area with sensitivity!" wrote one mother. A father confided that he wished his parents had had the benefit of a similar talk when he was a child.

A large crowd sat, mesmerized, as Rabbi Welcher explained that we, as Orthodox Jews, must approach this sensitive topic with



Rabbi Herschel Welcher

k'dushah and *tz'nius*. Despite the challenging contemporary environment, our natural characteristics of modesty and kindness provide us with necessary strength to broach this vital topic with our children. Rabbi Welcher encouraged parents to educate children prior to potential exposure from other sources.

Dr. Zimmerman also began by speaking of the need for modesty, which is a greater chal-



Dr. Shloimie Zimmerman

lenge in the 21st century environment. He explained that different *rabbanim* espouse different approaches to this delicate topic, and urged each parent to discuss this with their *rav* before beginning the dialogue with their child.

While many parents conceive of having an important talk with their child on this topic, Dr. Zimmerman explained that a healthier approach is to look at this as a

dialogue, encouraging ongoing conversations, which take into account the growth and changing level of maturity of your child.

Educating our children helps protect them. We can inoculate our children by educating them with Torah values, thereby preventing the confusion, shame, and guilt they would experience if they sought information from less appropriate sources. As Rav Aharon Feldman has said, we are negligent if we do not prepare our children to live in this world.

In the second part of the program, Dr. Zimmerman and Dr. Press spoke separately to men and women, each discussing the physical changes that children experience, and suggested methods for preparing their son or daughter for these. This was followed by a general question-and-answer session.

The audience was grateful for the opportunity to learn from two highly regarded professionals. The speakers expressed their appreciation for the successful partnership and look forward to further community programs.