

Around the Community



HALB second graders received their Chumashim on Sunday

Achiezer at 13: A Talk with Boruch Ber Bender Part 1 of a Series

By Avi Shiff

Achiezer was established in 2008 at the behest of local rabbinic and community leaders who saw a need for change. These visionaries dreamed of creating one master organization, which would completely remove the burden of crisis management from the shoulders of shocked and distressed victims. They dreamed of an organization that would be there for the entire community – at any time, for any difficulty, large or small.

They dreamed of Achiezer.

Achiezer is a unique organization that combines the strengths of all existing communal resources along with its own formidable capabilities. Achiezer spearheads and coordinates the many different aspects involved in assisting individuals and families confronted by challenges, from start to finish.

In honor of Achiezer's 13th year, we are conducting a multi-part series celebrating the various facets of this remarkable organization. For Week #1, we spoke to Achiezer's founder and leader, Boruch Ber Bender, for an overview.

Boruch Ber, congratulations on your 13th year, a major achievement. Tell us, if you

can, where Achiezer stands today and what people should know about Achiezer's current ambitious goals.

Boruch Ber Bender: The answer is one and the same. When we started in late 2008, Achiezer was a small fledgling idea. It has since become a mammoth organization operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with more than 12 departments, 18 staff members, and hundreds of volunteers. Achiezer has become a *chessed* empire the likes of which even the most optimistic people could have never imagined when we first started.

How has Covid-19 impacted your operation?

Covid has impacted us in a way that has been different than any other crisis, including Hurricane Sandy, which, as everyone knows, severely impacted residents in this part of New York. Covid has had a much greater impact. Covid has affected everybody, no matter where they live, no matter their age, with obviously varying severities. The sheer volume of need, though, has taken a tremendous toll on Achiezer. Covid put us, as an organization, through the ringer. At the same time, we continue to see greatness. Doctors and mental health professionals have



given of themselves in ways we've never seen before. It's been incredible to watch the level of *chessed* in our community.

In particular, when it comes to hospital support services, we've never been tested this way. Being hospitalized is always difficult, but imagine being in critical condition in the hospital on Shabbos with no visitation, no communication, and the responsibility to make medical and other decisions falling squarely on your shoulders.

How has Covid impacted the Achiezer budget?

During the spring, it affected us in a huge way, because Covid hit just a few months after our dinner and we depleted our funds because of the

unexpected costs of pandemic-related care, including ventilators, concentrators, and so on. We held a special online campaign to help keep us afloat, and once we knew that our dinner in January wouldn't take place, we've had to brainstorm and strategize to keep us going. We hope to be able to hold some sort of fundraising event in the near future.

In the meantime, Achiezer's Executive Board members in particular have rolled up their sleeves and gotten to work to make sure that we continue to flourish and not be hindered by these unexpected expenditures. We must always continue to provide for the community no matter what.

Thank you, Boruch Ber. Continued hatzlacha!