

About 40 rebbetzins from across Europe gathered in Manchester, England two weeks ago for the sixth European Rebbetzins Conference. Throughout the three-day program, participants listened to and learned from expert presenters on topics relating to resilience, education, trauma and antisemitism.

This year's conference keynote speaker was Rabbi Joey Haber, Rov of the Magen David Shul in Flatbush and the Beit Yosef Shul in Deal, New Jersey. Even though his own background differed substantially from that of an almost entirely non-American audience, Rabbi Haber related magnificently to each conference participant, beginning by asking each to describe briefly her shul community demographic.

"The audience was so easy to talk to," Rabbi Haber recalled shortly after the program, speaking of the rebbetzins who came from a dozen countries, including France, Italy, Germany, Austria and Gibraltar and even one member from Australia. "The group was so diverse yet so unified. They were engaging, smart, and sophisticated."

Throughout his talks on chinuch, technology, materialism and self-confidence, Rabbi Haber told inspiring stories often featuring powerful and memorable incidents from his own life.

Other speakers included Rebbetzin Ruchie Ehrentreu and Rabbi Rashi Simon, both of London, Nechama Rechnitzer of Manchester, and Chani Gottlieb of New York.

Rebbetzin Ehrentreu impressed the audience with her seasoned life wisdom, freely offering positive reinforcement and encouragement to participants in highlighting the importance of the rebbetzin's role in communal life. Rabbi Simon, from Keshet, who graciously helped promote the conference, spoke about the Torah's view on leadership. Mrs. Rechnitzer, a therapist, offered an in-depth presentation on trauma, featuring practical guidance on how to help those who experience trauma. Ms. Gottlieb, an accomplished high school teacher, addressed education and antisemitism.

"When I arrived [back] in Marseille, I felt like a young girl of 18 coming back from sem," wrote Rebbetzin Hanna Amram of France in a message to conference coordinator Mrs. Charlotte Dunner. "We had the opportunity to learn, to laugh, to cry. It was a moment of bliss and sanctity."

The program also featured a panel discussion on a variety of subjects that arise in rebbetzins' routine work, and a gala dinner with special speakers Rabbi Joey Grunfeld, founder of Seed UK, and maggid shiur Rabbi Mordechai Litwin.

Among the participants was Rebbetzin Dina Wolff of Amsterdam, who reminisced: "I just returned home, energised and strengthened. The three days were so inspiring, instructive and much more. The unity, togetherness and warm atmosphere – the friendships we had the chance to create and the ones that we were able to strengthen – added another greater dimension."