

## Rambam Record Parshat Ki Tisa

### Epic Rambam Purim Chaggigah and Talent Show

Rambam's Annual Purim Chaggigah featured tremendous ruach and dancing, a Costume Contest, Talent Show, Comedy Shpiel Video, and a surprise guest musician! With most of the school dressed up in their most creative costumes, it was difficult narrowing down "The Final Three." In the end, though, Yoni Szpigiel, dressed as Alexander Hamilton, faced off against Sir Josh Koegel in full armor, and Benji Weiner who sported a homemade "Chrome" costume with an actual working QR Code on the back. Based on the scientifically proven Donny Moskovits applause-o-meter, Yoni Szpigiel won the highly coveted "Best Costume Plaque."

The Talent Show was also a huge success that highlighted the diverse talents of Rambam Mesivta. It started with a Nate "The Great" Rosenberg Comedy Routine, followed by: Rabbi Noam Singer Jump-Rope and Juggling expedition, Rabbi Avrum Haar Original Song, Jon Welgrin Devil Sticks, Oren Teeter Body Twisting, Yoni Szpigiel and Sam Hofstetter "Hamilton" Medley, Craig Speiser Interpretive Dance, Eli Roth Yo-Yo, Eliyahu Levy Yo-Yo Challenge, Yoni Auerbach on the ukulele, Yaacov Feiner Stand-up Routine (and song!) and Avram Balsam Solo. The talent was awe-inspiring and MC, Gavriel Haviv, did a wonderful job introducing each act. One of the highlights of the event was when the crowd chanted for Eli Roth and Eliyahu Levy, originally scheduled for separate yo-yo acts, to return for the stage for a "Yo-Yo Duel!" They obliged and the audience was treated to a back-and-forth exchange that wowed the imagination. After tallying the votes, Rabbi Haar's spoof on "Minyan Man" won in the "Best Rebbe Talent Show" category, making Rabbi Haar a two-time talent show champion, and Eliyahu Levy won the "Talent Show Champion Award."

Natan Alon and the Guitar Club, featuring Yoni Saffra then turned down the lights and played "One Day" with the whole school joining in before announcing that surprise guest, Yisroel Williger, was there to lead everyone in dancing and song!

The Purim Extravaganza concluded with the Annual Purim Shpiel Video, created this year by Charlie Grill, Gavriel Haviv, Yair Oppenheim, and Rafi Lowe. The video was greeted with the sounds of thunderous laughter and applause and it marked the end of another fun and meaningful Purim Celebration at Rambam Mesivta.





### **Rambam Mesivta Talmidim Participate in Unique Yeshivas Mordechai HaTzadik Program**

This Purim, 19 Rambam Mesivta students gathered in the upstairs Bais Medrash of the Young Israel of West Hempstead for a special Rambam Mesivta Yeshivas Mordechai HaTzadik program. Led by 11th Grade Rebbe, Rabbi Aryeh Young, these students committed to learning an intensive, 90-minute morning seder after Shachris on Purim morning and spent the morning learning b'iyun the sugya of "Kriasa zu Halleila." On a day when most of the Torah world is (rightfully) busy with many Mitzvos and other family obligations, these Rambam students decided to do their share to add an extra boost of Limmud HaTorah to the world on this tremendously auspicious day. Almost eight years ago, Habochur HaChoshuv Yeshaya Dov Eckstein A"H was killed in a tragic car accident during the summer of 2009. L'ilui Nishmaso, his parents and a group of the family's loyal friends, have committed to sponsoring bochorim to learn each Purim. Each participating talmid receives a modest financial stipend to encourage his participation. When Rabbi Young reached out to Yeshaya Dov's father, Itzy, to ask if Rambam students could join the program, Mr. Eckstein immediately worked to incorporate the Rambam talmidim into this groundbreaking nationwide initiative, even though he had no prior connection to the anyone from the Rambam Mesivta community. The Talmidim each learned with tremendous energy and hasmada, and walked away truly proud of their tremendous Purim accomplishment. May their learning be a zechus for Yeshaya Dov A"H.



### **Joel Shiff Delegates Head to AIPAC**

Joel Shiff A"H, was a well-known supporter of Israel and AIPAC during his lifetime. He was also intricately involved in the Jewish community of the Five Towns , having served as a Library Trustee and active board member and president of Congregation Beth Sholom.

His wife, Jane, dedicated the Joel Shiff Beth Medresh in Beth Sholom as an everlasting memorial and generously sponsored delegates to participate in AIPAC.

Rabbi Zev Meir Friedman, longtime friend of the family said. "Joel, Alav Hasholom, left behind a legacy of community activism, caring for Israel and pride in being Jewish. We hope to perpetuate his memory by instilling in our students, the next generation, those very same values."

The AIPAC policy conference is an opportunity for thousands of people from all walks of life to express their support of Israel in a multi-denominational, bipartisan manner. This year, in addition to a delegation from Rambam there will also be a number of girls from Shalhevet that will be joining.

The students from Rambam, who will be chaperoned by Rambam alumnus, Mr. Jonathan Deutsch, will get an overview of their mission and learn more about Mr. Joel Shiff, from Rabbi Friedman, who will also be briefing and chaperoning the delegation from Shalhevet.

### **Rambam Juniors Interview Former UPENN Star Turned Religious Jew**

*By: The Rambam Interview Crew*

Hours after leading the Oilers to their fourth Stanley Cup in five years, Wayne Gretzky learned that he was going to be traded to the Detroit Red Wings, Vancouver Canucks, or LA Kings. He was traded to the Kings with two teammates for two players, \$15 million, and a first-round pick. He was upset; all of Canada was upset, so much so that the government almost stopped it. At first thought, it was upsetting to him that he couldn't be an Oiler for life. After contemplation, he realized that this is great for hockey! The competition would be better, and more importantly, his name could spread hockey all across the West Coast, which was in dire need of some hockey help. He did just that, and now some of the best NHL players, including Auston Matthews, are from the West Coast. Without Gretzky, we may not have any West Coast teams in the NHL at all. This story can be compared to that of Zack Rosen, whose original plans did not work out (he wanted to be drafted into the NBA), but he found out what was most important to him: becoming a religious Jew.

**Itai Eliach:** What was your connection to Judaism like growing up?

**Zack Rosen:** Growing up, I was raised I would say conservative-ish...we only got together for the main holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach... I went to Hebrew school, and had a bar mitzvah and that was it.

**IE:** How did you progress to a national powerhouse and play for Benedict's Prep in Newark, NJ?

**ZR:** Besiyata Deshmaya. I hurt my elbow really badly and the doctors looked at my elbow and said there's no way I'm coming back. I just kept working, and never took "NO" for an answer. That was my greatest quality.

**IE:** What was it like spearheading Coach Danny Hurley's team that was the #1 ranked team in the country, and which had many future NBA players?

**ZR:** We were good at all positions and [the experience] was amazing. But every single day, to fight for your spot and to become a real authentic, genuine competitor was an amazing experience.

**IE:** How was Danny Hurley as a Coach?

**ZR:** He can get the most out of people and push the right buttons. I would find it hard to believe that anyone coaching works harder than him. (Danny Hurley led the University of Rhode Island back to the NCAA Tournament this year)

**IE:** Which future NBA players did you play with on that team?

**ZR:** Tristan Thompson. Samardo Samuels was our best player, he played for the Cavaliers also. Lance Thomas, who played for the Knicks, was not on that team but in the gym.

**Jakey Srulovich:** How did you handle being Jewish on a Division I basketball team, and how did people look at you differently on and off the court?

**ZR:** I wasn't in touch with the fact that I was Jewish until senior year when I really started questioning things about my life.

**JS:** What other offers did you get from college programs around the country?

**ZR:** I had around 15 or 20 scholarship offers.

**JS:** Are you in touch with any of your teammates from Penn?

**ZR:** We were in touch, but being in Israel makes it harder.

**JS:** Who is the best player you played against in your college days?

**ZR:** Probably Ty Lawson or Brandon Knight.

**JS:** At Penn you were a 3 time captain the first ever in Penn history, what advice do you have to young athletes like me about how to be a leader?

**ZR:** I'd say one of the most important things I learned in my career is that you don't need to be the guy with the most ability to be a leader. There are many different types of leaders, and my advice to you is to figure out who you are and what type of leader you are.

**Jacob Korman:** What was your reaction to going undrafted?

**ZR:** At first, I didn't expect it. By the start of senior year, I started playing out of my mind. By draft time I firmly believed that with the class that was in there I could've gotten drafted.

**JK:** What did you experience from the Summer League?

**ZR:** A rude awakening of how much I needed to know basketball on the professional level. I had an amazing training camp with the Seventy Sixers. I got the opportunity to play, but I didn't play as well as I could've.

**JK:** You played for three professional teams in Israel, which one was your favorite and why?

**ZR:** Ashdod was my favorite, I loved everything about it. My first year was rough- I had a great coach, but I didn't know how to relate to him, but I learned a crazy amount.

**JK:** You vs. Steph Curry in a three point shoot-out, who do I put my money on?

**ZR:** I could possibly make about 80 or so. He's probably the best shooter of all time. To put my name in would be unfair to him.

**Gavriel Haviv:** I was told that the General Manager of the Orlando Magic said that he was going to draft you. Can you expand on that?

**ZR:** Well, the Magic really liked me, they were saying they were going to take me in the second round, and two weeks before the draft, he got fired.

**GH:** You won two consecutive three point contests in Israel, who taught you your three point shot?

**ZR:** It was really self-taught, but my father gets credit because he rebounded for me.

**GH:** Where in Israel do you live? What do you do for a living?

**ZR:** I live in Yerushalayim; I'm actually getting married in three weeks. I saved a lot of my money from playing, and I come back to America in the summer, and do camps, and speak. That takes pretty good care of me for now. I'm learning in Yeshivas Ohr Someyach

currently.

**Effie Klein:** In sports, you have the defining play of the game. What exactly was your "defining play" in life that made you become religious?

**ZR:** There was a Rabbi who walked into the Hillel. I've never seen anything like that in my life, and we spoke for the next hour. I was very intrigued by what he said, and 6 years later, he was the one who set me up with my wife.

**EK:** What's his name?

**ZR:** Rabbi Wenglin. He's actually from Scarsdale, NY. He went to Harvard and became a Baal Teshuva.

**EK:** What do you love most about being religious?

**ZR:** That's a hard question, it's all great! Mainly, the family, commitment, and discipline that pulled me in. I'm amazed by frum Jews, just amazed.

**EK:** Do you feel more at home in Israel as opposed to if you'd been in the NBA?

**ZR:** Culturally and religiously, definitely.

**EK:** Which former or current NBA players do you see yourself play like?

**ZR:** Steve Nash was my hero. I watched him a lot and tried to mimic his playstyle.

**Thank you to Zack Rosen,** for being so helpful throughout this entire process, graciously accepting our request to interview you, and for sharing your amazing story.

**Thank you to Shirley Levy** for helping us get settled, making sure Zack was on the line with us, and remaining patient after we accidentally called her phone a lot.

**Thank you to Rabbi Zev Meir Friedman** for letting us use his office.

**Thank you to Gavriel Haviv** for spearheading this project, for finding Zack Rosen, and for recruiting an all-star lineup.

**Thank you to Itai Eliach** for being the enforcer of the group; making sure everything got done on time, and for recording the interview.

**Thank you to Effie Klein** who had great questions, got everything in first, and checked the article for any mistakes.

**Thank you to Jakey Srulovich** for raising our standards on questions. Without his amazing questions, we wouldn't have had the same quality interview.

**Thank you to Jacob Korman** for joining the squad. His ideas and questions really put our interview at another level.



