

## Rambam Record

### Parshat Tazria-Metzora

#### **Israeli Brigadier General Speaks at Rambam**

Israeli Brigadier General, Bentzi Gruber, came to Rambam on Erev Shabbos, Parshat Tazria-Metzora, to set an early tone for the significance of Yom HaZikaron. Brigadier General Gruber shared that he feels "There is a direct line between Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron and Yom Haatzmaut," and how those who lived during the Holocaust continued the generations that have formed and protected Medinat Yisroel.

Principal Rabbi Yotav Eliach, a close personal friend of Brigadier General Gruber's, introduced the program by sharing an IDF video that featured excerpts from letters to loved ones written by soldiers before they fell in battle. One soldier wrote "My time is up" while another wrote, "I ask only that you remember me." This poignant video established the proper atmosphere for the assembly as Brigadier General Gruber then spoke about his time fighting in the first Lebanon War. He shared harrowing and heroic stories of his being shot and taking grenade shrapnel to the hand. He spoke about the long recovery and how lucky he is to, "Baruch Hashem, have my hand." This after having eight surgeries. He also spoke about the tragedy of friendly fire and about how he has "a Minhag to call on every Erev Shabbos all the widows of the soldiers" he lost in battle.

Despite being injured, Brigadier General Gruber decided to continue in the army because he knows what they are fighting for. He then proceeded to discuss the unfortunate reality of the difficulty American soldiers have readjusting to American life after returning from Afghanistan. Brigadier General Gruber, who recently spoke at West Point Academy, told over a story about an American Unit of 120 soldiers who fought over 12 years ago in Afghanistan. With the exception of three soldiers, all are either dead, homeless, on drugs, or have otherwise not readjusted to normal life. He contrasted this with the retired Israeli soldiers who go on to great things following the army. He believes the reason for this is because "In the Israeli Army everyone knows what we are fighting for: our families and for Israel. When the American soldiers are there they see Afghanistan: we see our homes."

Following a question and answer period that revolved around military philosophy and strategy, Rabbi Zev Meir Friedman, Rosh Mesivta of Rambam, discussed the importance of maintaining a Halachic framework in all arenas of life and discussed how everyone can help the IDF, even those who do not serve, by being an upstanding, committed, and proud Jew.

Rabbi Eliach concluded the assembly by relating his own experiences about Yom HaZikaron and the proper mindset for this important day. He shared a poignant story about a visit to Har Herzl when, in the middle of his being moved to tears, a widow and her daughter went over to him, pointed to her husband's kever and said, "Stop crying. My husband wouldn't want you to cry." The day, he explained, is about remembering those who fell and appreciating their sacrifices and the significance of

their lives.

It was a truly memorable assembly and Brigadier General Gruber left Rambam after receiving a standing ovation.



### **Yom HaShoah Assembly**

Before heading to a rally to protest a Nazi living in Queens, the tone was set when students from Rambam, were moved by a stirring Yom HaShoah assembly in which Principal, Rabbi Yotav Eliach and Rabbi Friedman spoke about the horrific events that transpired and the Torah mandate of "Zachor," to remember and never forget.

Rabbi Eliach played a scene from the HBO series *Band of Brothers* that depicted the American soldiers' discovery of the Concentration Camps. Seeing Jews emerge as skeletons and greet the liberating soldiers with tears and hugs was moving and gave an inkling of the horrors suffered by the Jews during the Holocaust.

The assembly also featured Yoni Auerbach and Benji Kattan, representing Harmonides, as they sang a meaningful rendition of "Shema Yisroel" by Yaakov Shwekey.



### **Yom HaShoah Rally Calls on Germany to Extradite Nazi Living in Queens**

April 24, 1943-Jewish residents confined to the Warsaw Ghetto begin an uprising against their Nazi oppressors. Brave Jews, confronting death, decide to die fighting, instead of letting the Nazis send them to concentration camps for extermination. After a month of heroic resistance, the overwhelming force of the Nazi army quelled the resistance.

In order to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto, the Nazis relied on "Trawniki Men," thousands of volunteers who agreed to carry out a brutal murder of the Jewish populace. Among those who trained in Trawniki was Jakiw Palij who entered the United States after World War II under false pretenses.

April 24, 2017-On the occasion of Yom HaShoah, students, parents, Rebbeim, and administrators rallied outside the home of Nazi war criminal, Jakiw Palij, who resides in Jackson Heights, Queens. Protesters held signs and chanted "Kick him out"; "No SS in the US"; and "No Palij in the USA."

Rabbi Friedman recounted the history of Palij's involvement in the murder of the 6000 Jewish prisoners of Trawniki and said that "Palij was a tough guy in Poland when he had a gun pointed at innocent and defenseless Jews, but yet in America is afraid of our students coming with signs."

At one point in the rally, Rabbi Friedman climbed the steps to Palij's house and rang the bell and knocked on the door. Upon seeing that Palij did not respond, students chanted in unison

"Don't you hear the knocking?" and "What a coward."

Mr. Hillel Goldman, Rambam's Assistant Principal spoke passionately about the outrage

everyone feels about the fact that Palij continues to live as a free man in the United States.

"Lady Liberty says 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,' She does not say: Give us your killers! Give us your murderers! Your Concentration Camp Guards! Your Nazis!" shouted Goldman, leading students in chants of "Justice now!" and "Kick him out!"

Sophomore Eliyahu Levy read aloud a letter from Congressman Joseph Crowley and 11th grade student, Yoni Grossman, read a letter from Congressman Gregory Meeks, both written on previous occasions when the school sought to have Palij extradited from the US.

Members of the media were out in full-force to hear speakers and participants demand that Germany immediately extradite Palij and put him on trial. Reuters, ABC, NBC, NY1 and members of the print media heard protesters express disappointment that Chancellor Angela Merkel was about to receive an award for her work in promoting Holocaust awareness, while the German government continues to allow Nazi war criminals to live in the free world, without being called to justice.

According to Rabbi Friedman "It is unconscionable that Germany refuses to take responsibility for Palij, a Nazi who was trained and instructed to kill thousands of Jews. How can Chancellor Merkel accept a Holocaust award in good faith, while she willingly refuses to take back a man who helped make possible the genocidal mass murder of men, women, and children on behalf of the former Nazi government of Germany?"

Students underscored this point by holding signs which read in both German and English "Palij gets away with murder-Merkel gets an award?"

In the morning, before heading to the rally, the tone was set when students from Rambam, were moved by a stirring Yom HaShoah assembly in which Principal, Rabbi Yotav Eliach and Rabbi Friedman spoke about the horrific events that transpired and the Torah mandate of "Zachor," to remember and never forget.



## **Rambam Track Team Gets on Track**

On Sunday, April 23, the first Yeshiva League Track Meet of the season was held at Kushner. In attendance were runners from Frisch, Flatbush, Kushner, Maayanot, TABC, SAR, Magen David, and Rambam Mesivta. The events included the 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1600m, 3200m, long jump, and 4x100m relay. With both excitement and stakes high, each event was run extremely well and extremely close. It was also the first season for Rambam as they look to get on track. Running for Rambam, Jon Welgrin clocked in a 3:17 in the 800m and a 7:20 in the 1600m.

Doniel Fodiman ran a 14.26, 28.31, and 15:50 in 100m, 200m, and 3200m respectively. A huge thanks to Coach Andrew Fodiman who made the team possible, putting in time and work for practices and driving to the meets. And another big thank you for the coaches of all the teams for making sure the meet went smoothly.

### **By: Doniel Fodiman (11th Grade)**

*Editor's Note: Thank you as well to Doniel Fodiman himself who truly made the Rambam Track Team a reality and to Jon Welgrin for laying the groundwork for the team last year.*

