

Rambam Record Parshat Terumah

Rambam Celebrates 25th Annual Dinner

Parents and supporters of Rambam Mesivta were treated to a sumptuous dinner and enjoyable program this past Motzei Shabbos.

This year's dinner highlighted Sarah and Adam Hofstetter as Guests of Honor, Zippy and Avi Fodiman as Parents of the Year and Rabbi Yitzchak (Mark) Friedman as Rebbe of the Year.

The crowd was entertained by the reemergence of Ovadya Aryeh and Itsy Alony who emceed the dinner 10 years ago. Ovadya and Itsy were joined by approximately 20 members of the graduating class of 1997. Alumni from the class of 2007 and other years also joined to support their alma mater.

After the anthems and brief introduction, Rabbi Zev Meir Friedman, Rambam's Rosh Mesivta, spoke about the message from Parshas Mishpatim which calls on us to push ourselves and leave our comfort zone. "The mitzvah of giving tzedakah is more than just writing a check. It is supposed to entail the process of identification with those in need, feeling their pain," said Rabbi Friedman quoting Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik.

"All of our honorees have gone out of their comfort zone and sacrificed in a manner which has created a Kiddush Hashem," continued Rabbi Friedman.

After the awards were presented by Rabbi Friedman and Rabbi Eliach, the honorees had a chance to respond in a lighthearted yet meaningful way. The emcees then introduced Rabbi Yotav Eliach, Rambam's Principal, who spoke about the school's commitment to Torah, midos and educational excellence. He spoke about the track record of the hundreds of alumni that Rambam has produced and how they have successfully taken leadership roles in their various communities.

At the conclusion of the presentations and speeches the dance floor was the venue for the next stage of the simcha which was capped off by... Desserts!





Lipa Schmeltzer Sings With Rambam Choir

Rosh Chodesh Adar at Rambam was a meaningful and boisterous affair that featured a surprise guest: Jewish music superstar, Lipa Schmeltzer!!! Rabbi Ari Boiangiu, Rambam Gemara Iyun Rebbe and guitar legend, introduced Lipa after showing a video that highlighted Lipa's illustrious career. Rabbi Boiangiu rocked the house with Lipa, but not before Lipa shared words of chizuk and a Dvar Torah. One of the highlights of the event, however, was when Lipa called up Rambam's own music sensations, "The Harmonides," to perform with him!

The singing and dancing continued as Lipa livestreamed the whole event to his fans! Eventually, the dancing was taken outside where Lipa led the school in more singing as well as chants of "Rambam Mesivta!"





The Glory That Was Once Vilna

For many years the Jewish community in Lithuania flourished. In fact, because of the great scholars that lived and taught there, its capital, Vilna, was referred to as the Jerusalem of Europe. The illustrious Gaon of Vilna is known worldwide throughout the Jewish community for his incisive genius, breath of knowledge and legendary dedication to Torah study. Other great codifiers such as the "Chayei Adam" lived and taught in Lithuania. Invariably, those that live also pass away.

The deceased of Vilna were buried in a large cemetery which was designated in the 16th century. Jews continued to live in Lithuania enjoying both good times and bad until the advent of the Holocaust. When the Nazis invaded Lithuania, approximately 200,000 Jews faced Hitler's decree of annihilation. Sadly, many Lithuanians happily participated in the murder of their Jewish neighbors.

Approximately 95% of Lithuania's Jewish population was murdered during the Holocaust. In one gruesome account a non-Jewish eyewitness testified that Lithuanian patriots captured Jews and locked in the Kovno garage, clubbed their victims to death and kept hoses running to wash away the blood during the massacre. As Jewish bodies piled high, a proud Lithuanian jumped on top of the bodies and played the Lithuanian national anthem on the accordion. Lithuanians also willingly participated in the mobile killing squads that went town to town rounding up Jews, forcing them to dig mass graves, and shooting their victims.

Ponary is the name of an infamous forest on the outskirts of Vilna. During the Holocaust, Aleksandras Lileikas, and Lithuanian volunteers, oversaw the murder of close to 60,000 Jews in that forest. Lileikas illegally obtained entry into the United States and when his Nazi past was discovered, students from Rambam Mesivta, lobbied Congress, rallied outside his home and pressured him to leave. When he finally fled in 1986, he received a hero's welcome in Lithuania.

Lithuania seems to have a hard time disavowing their anti-Semitic past. Lithuania is currently in the midst of the controversy surrounding their plans to construct a Convention Center in the middle of Vilna's oldest Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes District.

After the Young Israel of Woodmere sent out a petition to protest Lithuania's plans, Rambam Mesivta invited Rabbi Shnayer Leiman, a world-renowned expert on Jewish history, to speak to its students. Rabbi Leiman outlined Lithuania's sordid anti-Semitic past and provided a detailed explanation of the planned construction. He expressed his strong objection to the project and implored the students to get involved.

Shortly thereafter, Rabbi Friedman brought Akiva Shuck and Doniel Fodiman, two students from his shiur, to meet with Lithuanian counsel general in New York. They were joined by Larry Gordon, a community activist, and Editor of the Five Towns Jewish Times. The delegation expressed, in the strongest terms, their objection to the project. The Lithuanian representative defensively spoke of his government's attempt to build bridges with the Jewish community in an effort to promote tourism. Rabbi Friedman forcefully responded and said that the most effective way to build bridges would be to cease the project and put up a memorial to the 200,000 Lithuanian Jews murdered by their Lithuanian neighbors.

Students of Rambam plan to continue efforts to block the pending desecration of Vilna's Jewish cemetery and to contact members of Congress in support of an upcoming demonstration outside the Lithuanian consulate.

College Bowl Season Recap

After last year's thrilling overtime loss in the playoffs, this year's Rambam Varsity College Bowl Mavens were hoping to return to the playoffs. Alas, despite a strong 7-3 season, with all three losses decided in overtime, their season ended. Special thank you to Hall of Famers Donny "Five" Moskovits and Ariel Blumstein for captaining the Mavens to glory!

The Rambam JV's season peaked with winning the championship in Rambam's 7th Annual College Bowl Challenge against DRS, HAFTR, and Shalhevet. Their season also ended this week but the core four will be returning next year to take Varsity to the next level!

Mr. Goldman, who came out of College Bowl retirement to return as a reader, took the teams to Dunkin' Donuts where he treated them to coffee and donuts. They discussed the highlights of the season and looked toward the future.

