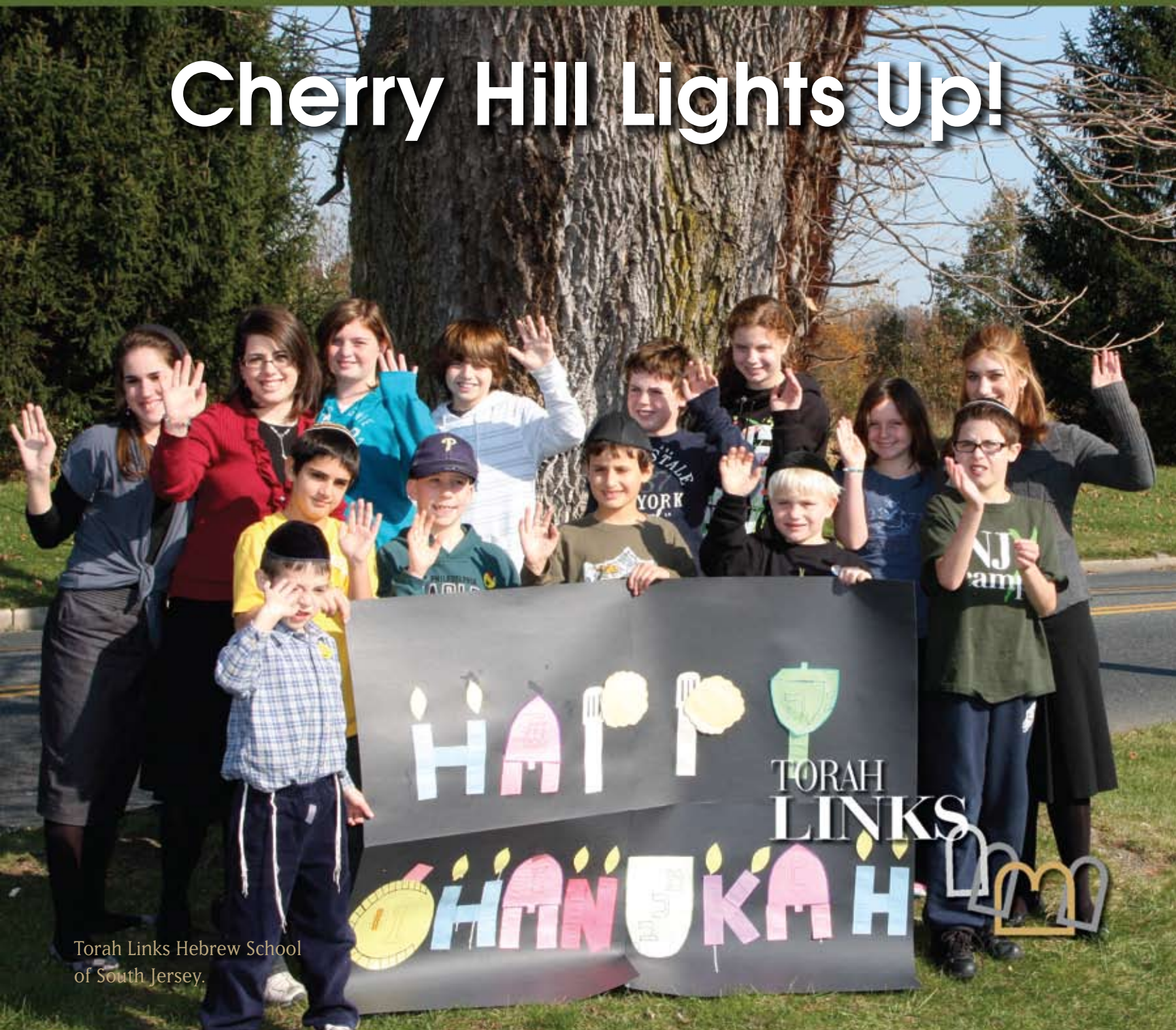


\$4.95
Winter 2009

TORAH LINKS SPIRIT

An American Jewish Spirit Magazine

Cherry Hill Lights Up!



Torah Links Hebrew School
of South Jersey.

TORAH
LINKS

HANUKKAH



It has been my pleasure and privilege for the last five years to host Rabbi Dovid Gross, Director of Torah Links of Middlesex, for one-on-one Torah study sessions at Wilentz, Goldman, and Spitzer, the firm where I am a senior partner in the real estate division. Rabbi Gross is so compelling a teacher that he has attracted many new students to our study group. Currently, between five and ten attorneys put their calls and appointments on hold so they can participate in a lively lunch—and-learn. The topic is the weekly Torah portion, which Rabbi Gross astutely ties to the issues of the day. It never ceases to amaze me how much relevance the Torah, written over 2,000 years ago, has to civil and business law, medicine, science, and even politics!

Jewish law begins with the immutable principles found in the Written Law (the Torah) and its counterpart, the Oral Law (or Oral Torah). Flowing from these sources is an entire system of law that was developed over centuries by rabbis from around the world. The substance of Jewish law is found not in any official government documents, but rather in the intellectual product of rabbis of the past 2000 years! It is worth noting that in the American legal

system, the most recent legal opinions are accorded primary authority, but the opposite is sometimes true in Judaic law. In the Jewish legal system, the greater the antiquity of the legal source, often the more authoritative it is. Since much of our legal system is based on the Talmud and Torah principles, it is important for jurists and legal scholars to research this ancient, yet highly relevant body of law.

My regular immersion in Torah study stimulates my ongoing communal activities with Jewish organizations such as Hillel, local synagogues and, on a national level, AIPAC. I am constantly faced with challenges and opportunities to represent Jewish causes with honesty and integrity, but at the heart of my endeavors are my study sessions with Rabbi Gross. I deeply appreciate both Rabbi Gross's and Rabbi Landau's (co-director of Torah Links) personal friendship and I am grateful for the positive impact they have had in the East Brunswick community.

The Jewish Spirit serves as a valuable forum for readers to explore important intellectual and spiritual topics. I am honored to introduce this particular issue, which contains trenchant examples of individuals who serve as role models for maintaining a consistently high standard in the ethically precarious world of business and law.

Wishing you all a very happy Chanukah!

Roy Tanzman

Wilentz, Goldman, and Spitzer

CLOSE UP ON TORAH LINKS



Page 50: Profile on Ray Benz



Page 54: A Time to Rejoice!

Cover Photo Credits: Shimon Golding

TORAH LINKS ADVERTISERS....

L'CHAIM VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

LEISURE CHATEAU CARE AND REHAB CENTER

LEVY'S KOSHER ITALIAN CUISINE

MBD MOVERS

NEW JERSEY GOLD BUYERS

SHOPRITE

YESHIVA AT THE JERSEY SHORE

Torah Links

Board of Trustees

Michael Levin
Chairman

Rabbi Aaron Gruman
Director

Aaron Birnbaum
Warren Gleicher
Fred Gross
Morris Kaplan
Aaron Kotler
Andy Neff

Stephen Oster
Steve Reich
Mordy Schron
Chaim Silberberg
Aaron Wolfson

Torah Links of Eastern Monmouth County
ylieberman@torahlinks.org

Monmouth Torah Links
www.monmouthtorahlinks.org

Torah Links of Middlesex County
www.middlesextorahlinks.org

Torah Links of South Jersey
www.tlsnj.org

Torah Links of Bergen County
nj@torahlinks.org

Torah Links Main Office
mail@torahlinks.org www.torahlinks.org



*New Jersey's
Finest Jewish
Rehabilitation
Center*

Leisure Chateau

CARE & REHABILITATION CENTER

- 24-hour Professional Registered Nurses
- IV Therapy Certified Nurses
- Wound Care Nurse Specialist
- Physical, Occupational & Speech Therapy
- 7 Days/Week Therapy Provided
- Hip or Knee Replacements, Post Stroke & Cardiac Rehab
- Newly Renovated
- Many Medical Innovations
- State of the Art Equipment
- Glatt Kosher Gourmet Meals (KCL)
- Daily Visits from Bikur Cholim
- Special Respite Short-Term Program

SEPARATE REHAB ENTRANCE

SEPARATE REHAB DINING ROOM

PRIVATE ROOMS AVAILABLE



Dr. Allen Lempel, CMD
Medical Director

Dr. Chi Wu, MBA Physiatrist

Medical Director, Health South Rehab
Conis River, New Jersey

962 River Ave.
Lakewood, N.J. 08701
732-370-8600 ext. 105
Fax 732-370-8676

visit our website:
www.leisurechateau.com
admissions@leisurechateau.com



NJ gold buyers

TURN THIS
OUTDATED
JEWELRY
INTO
CASH

**10%
Additional
Cash!**

cash in your gold jewelry
at the highest prices ever!

WE ALSO BUY DIAMONDS, PLATINUM, WATCHES, COINS & SILVER

(732) 7NJ-GOLD

JACKSON
1125 E. Veterans Hwy.
(across from Jackson Crossing)
732-765-4653

MONROE
Monroe Jewelers
Concordia Shopping Center
(Near Stop & Shop)
609-409-3600

OCEAN TWP.
Rout 25 & West Park Avenue
732-660-1465

MARLBORO
Sarafina Jewelers
Rt. 520 & Rt. 79
732-946-1777

Need Directions? Go to www.7NJGOLD.COM
Licensed & bonded Professional Jewelry Appraisers Over 20 Years

**EARN EXTRA
CASH**
call about hosting
a gold party



Who will inspire your child to love learning?

Yeshiva at the Jersey Shore will. Our child-centered curriculum is designed to nurture every student's intellect and unique sense of self. Our atmosphere is both challenging and comfortable, so that your child will learn and grow while building self-esteem.



Now accepting applications for grades 1-6!

The little school that can make a big difference in your child's life

Yeshiva at the Jersey Shore
LOCATED AT THE JCC OF GREATER MONMOUTH COUNTY
100 GRANT AVENUE, DEAL PARK, NJ 07723
732-663-2929 • WWW.YATJS.ORG



Levy's

WE DELIVER!
335 Route 9 South
Manalapan, New Jersey
732-683-9978

KOSHER ITALIAN CUISINE
RESTAURANT & CATERERS

- ~ITALIAN PASTA, FISH AND PIZZA SPECIALTIES~
- ~GOURMET SUSHI PLATTERS~
- ~DELICIOUS SALADS & WRAP PLATTERS~
- ~BEAUTIFUL SMOKED FISH & SHIVA PLATTERS~
- ~FRESH FRUIT & CRUDITES PLATTERS~
- ~MOUTH WATERING DESSERTS~
- ~& SO MUCH MORE!~



Cholov Yisroel ~ Pas Yisroel ~ Yeshon Pizza ~ Shomer Shabbos

Please call for a catering menu or come visit us at our restaurant!

L'Chaim
VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

Simchas
Special Events
Projections
Photo Montages
Dinner Presentations
SCRIPT WRITING & NARRATION SERVICES

CHAIM ROSEN 917.650.1348

Have a L'Chaim at your Simcha!

DC DESIGN / 732.501.4764



M.B.D.

moving & storage

make a

MOVE

in the

RIGHT DIRECTION!



Artwork & Antiques



Residential & Commercial



Local & Long Distance

Free Estimates

Licensed and Insured

Professionally trained personnel

We carry a full line of moving supplies

Special packing & crating for long distance & storage

Professional disassembly and reassembly of all furniture

call
Ari Boyer

732-367-MOVE (6683)

TRUSTED SINCE 1988

50

PROFILE ON RAY BENZ MAN OF GOLD VALUES

Ray and Stacey Benz with children Sara, age 11
Emily, age 8 and Felix, age 4



Living in Marlboro, and being part of the Monmouth Torah Links community, I have gotten to know many wonderful people who are interested in learning more about Judaism. Ray Benz was among the first of my new acquaintances here, and we have since become close friends. We meet to learn on Mondays, and I always find his insights into the Torah inspiring and unique. Ray, his wife Stacey, and their children are an important part of our community and are very warm and special people. Stacey always has a kind word to say to everyone, and their daughters Sara and Emily are exemplary students in our Hebrew School.

It is an honor to know someone like Ray Benz. Ray's strong sense of truth and honesty has led him to develop an appreciation for our Torah and traditions. Some find it difficult to follow their hearts when they recognize the truth in the Torah, but Ray has proven to be one who cannot live with any discrepancies between the right thing and the way he lives his life. For Ray, talking about Hashem and His Mitzvahs is not a philosophical exercise; it is a search for the right thing to do.

Ray's honesty and humility shows in the way he conducts business, in his Torah observance, and in all aspects of his life. I am glad that he agreed to do this interview even though he usually doesn't like the limelight. Like all of our conversations, I found his answers deep and well thought out. - Rabbi Mordechai Eisenberg

JS: Ray, tell us a little about yourself- where you were born and raised, the origins of your interesting name...

RB: I was born in Baltimore and my family moved to Brooklyn when I was five, in Sheepshead Bay. Originally our name was Benzaken. My parents emigrated from Egypt in 1961. They owned a jewelry retail business in Brooklyn for over thirty years which I grew into and eventually took over. I sold it and moved to New Jersey in 2000.

JS: So jewelry is in your blood. What is your specialty and where are you situated?

RB: With the surge in the price of gold, my business consists mainly of buying and selling gold. I buy jewelry- regular, estate and antiques. I also buy gold coins and bullion. I have four outlets- Ocean, Marlboro, Monroe, and I just recently opened a store in Jackson.

JS: How do consumers know if they're getting paid predatory prices or if the buyer is giving them an honest evaluation? It's so easy to fleece people...

RB: We try to fleece whoever we can! Just kidding, that's a legitimate question. In this business, there may be some unscrupulous people. Seller beware! People should shop around before selling their gold. That's the best policy.

JS: Can you tell if you are being sold stolen goods?

RB: This business is regulated. Legally, sellers have to be over eighteen and must present a valid ID. Buyers have to fax in their purchases every night to their local police department and are required to hold the merchandise for three days, and in some towns, seven days. This gives the police the ability to identify stolen jewelry. In my vicinity, the police released the names of approximately twenty delinquents who engage in criminal activity- drugs, theft, etc... these kids typically steal from their own homes and neighbors. I discourage them by insisting on seeing their ID and by being positively unfriendly and they don't come back to me. Unfortunately, there may be buyers out there who don't play by the rules and who do not fully disclose their purchases. That isn't how I conduct business. If I'm not doing it right, I won't do it!!

ME: According to *Halachah*, Jewish Law, one is not allowed to purchase stolen goods. I've known Ray for the last five years- he is not only a close friend of mine, he's also my steady Torah study partner. He's always asking questions. The laws can be complicated and need to be examined on a case by case basis. When I am unsure of the answer, I ask my grandfather, Rabbi Reuven Feinstein, a world renowned expert in Talmudic law. I can say this: Ray has an instinctive feel for what is right. Our sages say, "*The question of a wise man is half the answer*". When Ray asks me a question, he's halfway there!

JS: What sort of questions can arise?

ME: I will give you a small example that exemplifies Ray's utter integrity. When it came to hiring someone who lives in Brooklyn and who did not come on a regular basis to New Jersey, he wasn't sure what to do. The Torah dictates that an employer must pay his salaried workers every day, unless other arrangements were agreed upon. He was bothered by the fact that he couldn't pay her every day! He addressed this question to me.

JS: Ray, how did you develop such sensitivity?

RB: My father, who passed away twenty years ago, ingrained in me this principle. He used to say to me: *you may not be the biggest or best jeweler in the world. But honesty, that's the finest product you can possess- and you can provide it free of charge! Your integrity can never be taken away from you.*

JS: Do you always accept Rabbi Eisenberg's answers?

RB: If he can show me the truth about something, I accept it! If the doctor is writing the prescription, how can you argue with it? I've seen it shown to me. People who indulge in vices and dishonesty- it gives them false happiness.

JS: Naturally, in business you work hard to make the highest profit possible. How do you feel when you see someone making a lot of money too quickly and dishonestly? Don't you wish you could do it as easily?

RB: Oh no! They're going to lose it in another way! Money can't replace healthy kids, etc... Every day I am happy to stand before G-d and thank Him for everything in my life and for my healthy family. Health has no price and there isn't a day that I don't thank G-d for it.

JS: Have you ever been "tested" at work?

RB: Sure! I can remember three times in the course of thirty years that we lost a customer's repair. In another person's store, the employees may have liked to make up a story to save face- like they were robbed or something. That's not



Rabbi Mordechai Eisenberg with Ray Benz at the MTL Center

how I do it. If I lost a customer's ring I will confess to it! I will do everything in my power to replace it and make the customer very happy.

I never boast to my customers- I'm an honest man. My father used to say: *never display your honesty, it will emanate from you. It comes out of your pores.* My customers keep coming back and they've even tracked me down from Brooklyn to New Jersey.

There was also the time that the gold refiner overpaid me approximately \$5,000! When you volume a million dollars a day, \$5,000 isn't noticeable. I am pretty confident they wouldn't have discovered the error. But I called him anyway and told him his brother had already paid me.

JS: What about other circumstances that don't involve your business? How does that carry over?

RB: I'll tell you a little story. Not long ago, I purchased an electronic gadget before going on vacation. Unfortunately it got damaged when I went swimming. I returned to the retailer ten days later to purchase another one. The salesman was surprised to see me and after consulting with his manager told me, "All we have to do is backdate the original receipt so that you can still be eligible to purchase insurance on the device, and you get a new one free!"

I flatly refused. It's not truthful! He looked at me as if I had three heads! If a person is willing to lie, that means they aren't taking accountability for anything they do. It makes it easy for them to commit any crime and just get away with it by not disclaiming it. Deceit is the beginning of all evil.

JS: When you "take a loss" because of your honesty, does it bring you blessings?

RB: Absolutely- it makes me positively happy! The satisfaction that I'm doing the right thing is the greatest feeling. And G-d is paying me back- I have great, healthy kids!

It's written, "Serve G-d with happiness". How can G-d force you to be happy- happiness isn't something you can do on demand! I heard a Rabbi explain it this way: happiness is a consequence of service to G-d. When you are doing G-d's Will, when you deal with people with truthfulness and integrity, that brings you happiness.

JS: Has your Torah study affected the way you conduct business?

RB: I think my sense of honesty is what brought me to Torah study and Torah study in turn has brought me to an even higher standard- it has raised the bar by providing specific guidelines of right and wrong.

JS: Has anyone ever suspected you of cheating?

RB: I remember once, an Italian client of mine came to the store while I was away. He let me know when I returned that he wasn't happy with the payment he received. We had a heated discussion and finally I told him, "I don't allow dishonesty in my place. *What am I going to do with your money- am I supposed to feed my kids with stolen money?*"

The fellow was silent for a long time. I think it really struck a deep chord. Maybe it even changed the way he does business with others. That comes from my learning. You only get what's coming to you.

Jews are perceived by non-Jews to be on a higher standard- that's why we're so newsworthy! **We have a transmission, a chain that goes back a long way. That's the only reason we're still here.**

A TIME TO REJOICE!

BY ANDREW HANAN



Andrew and Esther Hanan with Jacob age 7, Baby Yehoshua, Benjamin, age 3 and Rena, age 5

One of the special aspects of Jewish life is our calendar. Jews are blessed with Shabbos weekly and Yomim Tovim throughout the year. These days constantly remind us of our connection to Hashem, and our purpose in this world.

For our family, Succos is one of the most special Yomim Tovim. Succos uplifts the individual by contrasting the material and spiritual realms and emphasizing the reasons to rejoice every day.

When Succos arrives, observation of the natural world could be disheartening. With winter approaching, we see life beginning to lose its vigor. We know that our physical lives are subject to the same toll of time.

Yet, spiritually, Succos sends a different message. On Rosh Hashanah, Jews begin a new year and, through Yom Kippur, they receive a clean slate upon which to build. Thus, we enter Succos with the opportunity to begin making the most of a new year. Not surprisingly, Hashem fills Succos with numerous mitzvos so we can begin capitalizing immediately.

One of these mitzvos is to dwell in the succah. From a material view, this can be uncomfortable. We leave the secure environment of our homes and become subject to the uncertainty of the natural elements. When we dwell in the succah, we get a glimpse of the frailty of our existence and can perceive that our material possessions offer us no enduring security.

The spiritual message is just the opposite. Our permanent shelters and their attendant comforts tend to create the illusion that we are in total control of our existence. But when we leave them to dwell in the succah, we can see more distinctly that, in fact, our only true security lies with our Creator. That type of security is eternal

and limitless.

These spiritual messages are connected with the Torah's commandment that, on Succos, we "shall rejoice". It may seem odd for Hashem to command us to be happy, particularly when we must brave the elements in a manner to which more precious each year.

A Cherry Hill Simchas Torah

By Lori Samlin Miller



Writer, Lori Miller with daughter, Emily, Torah Links Hebrew School teacher

Succos and Simchas Torah were wonderful in Cherry Hill [again] this year, not just because we were fortunate with the great weather, but because of the many opportunities to sit, eat, dance, and socialize with family and Torah Links friends.

Coming from diverse Judaic backgrounds, our Cherry Hill Torah Links members have differing experiences with these holidays. Growing up in Wynnefield, Pa, I was immersed in these amazing fall holidays and find the chance to relax with family and friends is sweeter and

Last year I attended my first Simchas Torah Honors Auction, now in its fifth year in Cherry Hill. The air was electric this year as last; the tone both festive and serious as the small room filled with a standing room only crowd. Witnessing and participating in this event was surprisingly, a lot of fun.

Here are a few comments I gathered from other members:

"The idea of bidding for honors is something I never grew up with, but it is a delightful way to help fund the Torah Links *minyán*, and it's a lot of fun for us," said founding member, Mrs. Iris 'Chaya Dina' Frankel. At the first honors auction she attended, Mrs. Frankel was not afraid to bid.

"I thought, this is it, I wanted to buy an *aliya*."

She laughed as she recalled what happened next:

"I wound up bidding against Steven (my husband), and that became a tradition for us."

we are unaccustomed. But something deeper is involved. The Torah is teaching us to recognize our special relationship with Hashem -- that He controls the world, that everything that He does is for the good (though, sometimes, it may be beyond our capacity to understand how), and that He is our ultimate refuge. When we can truly understand and internalize those concepts, rejoicing is inevitable.

My family and I have been involved with Torah Links of Cherry Hill – led by Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi Serebrowski and Rabbi Mordechai Miller – for five years, and it is impossible to exaggerate the organization's impact in Cherry Hill. In our predominantly Jewish neighborhood, the arrival of Succos has little, if any, import for most Jews.



Torah Links Sukkah Party for Kids

Not surprisingly, ours' is the only succah on the block. One might despair of this situation, but

there is good reason to be optimistic because Torah Links is making tremendous strides in turning things around.

"The *aliyas* people buy at the auction are so meaningful they feel they have to have them," explained Mrs. Brenda Gross, wife of Cherry Hill Torah Links president, Fred Gross. "The honor they get raises them up, so they give the money, will fight for it with money because it is special to them and gives the Torah Links *minyan* the money it needs to operate," Mrs. Gross added.

Mrs. Yvette Zand has attended each of the five auctions, watching the amount of money raised grow each year.

Mrs. Frankel emphasized, "We are really celebrating reading, learning, and living the Torah. The synagogue doesn't just belong to us, to the adults," she added, "but to the kids. We are investing in their future."

My teenaged daughter, Emily Miller shared, "From being at the auction, I was able to see that our community wants Torah learning to be central in their lives. It's beautiful to see that our community invests time and money in Cherry Hill's growth as a Torah Community."

Mrs. Frankel reminded me to tell everyone that we tried something new and creative:

raffling off the chance to play ping-pong against Rabbi Serebrowski, who just happens to be an excellent ping-pong player. Last year Mrs. Frankel bought this ping-pong championship opportunity for her son-in-law. Before making aliyah with Nomi and Yaakov Moshe, Binyamin played a very competitive round with the Rabbi. The idea really caught on this year and many more people bought games of ping-pong against Rabbi Serebrowski, proving you can have fun raising money.

Mrs. Cindy Volpin attended the Honors Auction for the first time this year.

"It was exciting to watch people get so excited. Watching kids participate was the best part for me." At times Mrs. Volpin said she "held her breath to see how far the bidding would go."

I'm glad to be part of this Cherry Hill Torah Links Community. It feels good to give something back in order that Torah learning will continue to grow and be shared and experienced by others.

Among the other activities they conduct all year, prior to Succos, the Rabbis give popular classes on the meaning and laws of the Festival, and help growing numbers of people obtain succahs, lulavim and esrogim. The highlight of Succos in Cherry Hill is the very popular Torah Links Succos party with food, music, entertainment for the children and, of course, an enormous succah. There is nothing as gratifying as seeing all the children in attendance – with new faces every year – who otherwise might have grown up with little or no exposure to the Festival.

When I started attending Torah Links' Shabbos services in 2004, we struggled to get a minyan. But now hundreds of people are involved with Torah Links and our minyan is preparing to build a new shul to accommodate the growing membership.

The lessons seem straightforward. Our Jewish heritage is tremendously rich, as we see when we plumb the depths of meaning behind the special days of our calendar. If we want to preserve that heritage, and pass it on to our children so they understand their purpose in this world and what it really means to be a Jew, it is incumbent upon us to apply the effort. Supporting, and participating with, Torah Links is a perfect way to do that.

Shalom New Jersey!

Welcome in the Sabbath with a delicious meal made with brands that you can depend on, at the store that is committed to providing you with a Kosher experience that is beyond your expectations. Great names that have been around since grandma was a girl and exciting new Kosher and imported products are all at ShopRite. Go online to shoprite.com for a complete listing of the ShopRite store nearest you.

KEBEM[®] Manischewitz
EST. 1917 SINCE 1999

Sabra
The Original
Tahini Dressing

Cohen's
By Not Just Kosher, It's Culture

MISHPACHA
The Original
Maccas

New York's Famous
Ratner's

AB
FAMOUS
The Way Goodness Should Be

GEFEN

OSEM

GUILTLESS
gourmet

JASON.

HEBREW
NATIONAL
THE ORIGINAL GUISSE OF KOSHER MEAT

Coca-Cola

SEASON
BRAND

Hunt's

Fleischmann's

Seagram's vitaminwater
vitamins + electrolytes + antioxidants

QUAKER

Tropicana.

ShopRite

TORAH
LINKS

4 Cornwall Drive
East Brunswick, NJ
08816

