

BALTIMORE

Photo credit: Rabbi Dovid Kapenstein



Rabbi Gedaliah Goldstein prepares his third-grade students for the *Brachos* Bee at Yeshivas Toras Simcha.



Rabbi Dovid Heber and Rabbi Shai Scherer with the *Brachos* Bee contestants at Yeshivas Toras Simcha.

Brachos Bee at Yeshivas Toras Simcha

Rabbi Shai Scherer directed a *brachos* bee program for Yeshivas Toras Simcha students. The *talmidim* were given packets which listed various foods and their corresponding *brachos*, with older grades being asked to learn the *halachos* of foods for which the appropriate *brachah* is not so clear. The *talmidim* studied the packets, and on Monday, January 29, two students were chosen to repre-

sent each class for the final *bechinah*.

Rabbi Dovid Heber, Rav of Congregation KAYTT and Star-K administrator, came to test the *talmidim*, and first treated them to a story about his visit to the Kellogg's and Kemach factories. Rabbi Heber explained why the *brachah* on cornflakes depends on which factory it was made in, based on a *psak* from Harav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*. Rabbi Heber then quizzed the class representatives and prizes were given to the students who scored highest.



L-R: Reb Ari Nussbaum, Reb Avromi Janowski, Reb Dovid Rosen, Reb Binyomin Smith, Reb Sruly Portowicz and Reb Shlomo Tzvi Levine.

Toronto: Kollel Ohr Yosef of Thornhill, Toronto, Embarks on Fifth Year of Adopt-A-Kollel Partnership

On Monday, 19 Shevat/January 29, Kollel Ohr Yosef of Thornhill, Toronto, held a special Adopt-a-Kollel reception to celebrate the commencement of its fifth year of partnership with Kollel Lamed Tes Melachos of Yerushalayim.



At the 5th annual Adopt-a-Kollel renewal of Kollel Ohr Yosef of Thornhill, Ontario.

PHOENIX

MSG at Torah Day School Of Phoenix Take on the 'Mi LaHashem Eilai' Challenge

It was 8:30 on Motzoei Shabbos, a few weeks ago, and the middle school girls were just starting their night. They were celebrating the completion of a challenge posed to them over the Chanukah season. Over 90% of the girls participated, and now they were enjoying the exclusive trip.

The middle school girls were challenged with taking a timeout from technology over Chanukah. The first half an hour after *licht-bentching* is a special time to sit by the candles and recount the *nissim* of Chanukah. Each girl chose how long they wanted to remain off their devices — ranging from half an hour to two hours.

The concept for the challenge came to Morah Nomi Zachter when she was teaching about the message of Chanukah. The Yevanim were defiling the Beis Hamikdash, but that was just a part of what was going on. The Jews were strongly influenced by their Yevani neighbors, and the culture of the Greeks leaked into and influenced the culture of the Jews. The Jews were at a spiritual low, adapting the ways of the Yevanim.

"The story of Chanukah is about a group of Maccabim who stood behind the banner of 'Mi LaHashem Eilai,'" shared Morah Zachter. "They stood with the Torah and slowly were able to bring everyone back. We wanted to give the girls the same opportunity." Today, the strongest cultural influence that is permeating the Jewish community is technology. This is how Morah Zachter chose a screen break as the challenge for Chanukah.

When the idea was first posed to the girls, they were a bit skeptical. Rivka Khasanov of 8G shares: "At first I thought it was very bizarre." Once they understood the logic behind it, they were ready to participate. Some girls were able to aim for two screen-free hours with ease. Those who had a device more readily available really put in effort to stay on task.

This challenge had an impact on the girls' Chanukah. "My mind wasn't thinking about mundane things; I was able to focus on Chanukah and the candles," Rivka shares. A sixth grader who chose to remain anonymous felt that the absence of a phone or ipad helped keep her mind on the message of Chanukah and "it felt holy." The entire Abaev family chose to join Odellia in taking a break from phones and screens after candle-lighting. Michal Babkhanov of 6G shared her experience, "It was a challenge, but it definitely helped." The time after *licht-bentching* became a more focused time than it might have been in the past.

After Chanukah, the girls turned in their checklist and were soon rewarded with an exciting activity. On Motzoei Shabbos, 40 girls met at Torah Day School for a fresh and delicious pizza *melaveh malkah*. They were then driven to the ice-skating rink, where they had a blast skating around together. This trip brought the entire mission full circle, as the girls were having a great time just being with each other without any electronics. As the girls put it, "That was one really fun Motzoei Shabbos!"