

## PHILADELPHIA



Harav Elias speaking at the kollel on Erev Shabbos.

#### 4th Annual 'Shabbos Elevate' At the Philadelphia Community Kollel

On Shabbos Parashas Behar-Bechukosai, the Philadelphia Community Kollel hosted their 4th annual Shabbos Elevate, an exhilarating, three-day journey to help the *kehilah* elevate their *ruchniyus* to the next level, in preparation for *Kabbalas HaTorah*.

This year's special guests were Harav and Rebbetzin Dovid and Chaya Elias. Rav Elias is *Rosh Kollel* of the Montreal Community Kollel.

Over the course of Friday, Shabbos and Sunday, there were over 25 different events, including customized talks for different demographics within the community. Planning and directing the Shabbos of *Chizuk* was an intense operation, but as Rabbi Yoel Dovid Zeffren, Associate *Rosh Kollel*, remarked, "Judging by the level of participation and the positive feedback, it was very worthwhile."

The programming began on Friday morning, with Rabbi Elias giving a *parashah shiur* at a private residence, a *shmuess* for the *yungeleit* at the kollel and an Erev Shabbos talk at the Mesivta High School of Philadelphia. Simultaneously, Rebbetzin Elias delivered a talk for senior women on the topic of "The Magic of Thankfulness: *Bikurim* and *Modim d'Rabbanan*." This was followed by programs for middle school girls at Caskey Torah Academy and high school girls at Kosloff Torah Academy.

The Shabbos *seudos* were open to the community, and exuded warmth

and camaraderie. At each *seudah*, Rav Elias delivered *divrei Torah* and *divrei chizuk*. The *seudos*, as well as the Shabbos *tefillos*, were enhanced by the beautiful *zemiros* and *tefillos* of Chazzan Dovid Cukier.

Shabbos was packed with various *drashos* and *shiurim*. One of the highlights was the *drashah* delivered before *Mussaf* in shul, entitled, "Higher Regard: Raising the Honor of Our *Mekomos HaTefillah* and *Batei Medrash*." Rav Elias quoted the Tosfos Yom Tov, who wrote that the decree of Tach V'Tat took place because people were talking in shul. The *passuk* states, "*Ki mi goy gadol asher lo Elokim kerovim eilav. (Devarim 4:7)*" We have the unique privilege of being able to call out to Hashem whenever we want; but in order to be answered, we have to be careful with our *tefillah*.

On Shabbos afternoon, Rebbetzin Elias spoke at the keynote session for women on the topic, "*Kabbalas HaTorah: Identifying Our Mission*."

In addition to Rav and Rebbetzin Elias, Rabbi Yonason Sasportas, a Sephardi Rav from Lakewood, joined the Shabbos and spoke several times, including twice to the Sephardi community. In addition, Mrs. Chaya Rivky Leiser, a well-known educator, came to speak to the girls.

*Seudah shelishis* was held with the young, professional *bnei Torah*, featuring a *shmuess* on the topic, "Higher Commitment: How to Remain a *Ben Aliyah* for Life."

On Sunday morning, Rav Elias delivered an in-depth *halachah shiur* at the New Shul, on the topic of *Kvod Talmidei Chachamim*.

The climax of the weekend was on



L-R: Rabbi Yonason Sasportas, Rav Elias, Rabbi Yoel Dovid Zeffren and Rabbi Yosef Prupas.



Rav Dovid Elias speaking.

Sunday evening, with the Dr. David E. Epstein, Z"l, Memorial Lecture, delivered by Rav Elias on the topic, "The Eternal Gift of *Mattan Torah*." Rav Elias elaborated on the *Gemara (Shabbos 88b)* which describes how after the *chet ha'egel*, the beautiful fragrance of Hashem was given away to others and that this is a sign of His love.

Rav Elias explained: Immediately after *Mattan Torah*, Torah was easily accessible to all, but after the *egel*, Hashem wrapped up the Torah and made it exclusively available to those who are willing to exert themselves in order to attain it. In truth, this reflects Hashem's love for *Klal Yisrael*, that despite our shortcomings, the fragrance retained its potency and can

still be attained.

Rabbi Zeffren commented on the success of the Shabbos. "Our goal in planning this Shabbos was to have these great people come and spend Shabbos as they usually do, and we would just hang onto their coattails and be uplifted together with them.

The Eliases are very special people, and the community really took advantage to learn from them. I have heard from many people that the impact of these Shabbosos really lasts the whole year. The community responded in a great way; as long as people are enjoying and taking advantage, as long as they are being inspired and elevated, we will continue to plan and host these beautiful Shabbosos!"