Philadelphia

Philadelphia Community Kollel Celebrates Bar Mitzvah Dinner

On Motzoei Shabbos, January 4, the Philadelphia Community Kollel hosted its bar mitzvah dinner, celebrating 13 years of *harbotzas haTorah* in the Philadelphia community. The event recognized Elliot and Amy Holtz as Guests of Honor, and Avi and Julie Zohar with the Young Leadership Award.

"It was a unique evening, with a lot of good feeling in the room," says Rabbi Yoel Zeffren, assistant *Rosh Kollel*. "The event was sold out, as it has been for the past five or six years, and was our most successful dinner yet."

An exciting video presentation depicted the important place that the *kollel* has become for the community — a place where people come to learn, a place where people bring their children, a place that transmits the joy of Torah, and a place whose alumni move on to strengthen the entire *kehillah*.



L-R: Elliott Holtz, guest of honor; Rabbi Yechiel Biberfeld, *Rosh Kollel*; and Rabbi Yoel Zeffren, assistant *Rosh Kollel*, at the Philadelphia Community Kollel's 13th annual dinner.

Rabbi Yechiel Biberfeld, *Rosh Kollel*, addressed the crowd, further emphasizing the contributions the *kollel* has made to the Philadelphia community.

"Today, we are lost in a plague of darkness, similar to what the people of Mitzrayim experienced. As in Mitzrayim, only those who can see the light of Torah will be saved. At the *kollel,* people are shown how to live life seen through the lens of Torah.

"When there is a life permeated by Torah, one obtains a different perspective, a different world view, different ways of coping with challenges, a different way of doing business, a different way of treating a spouse, and a different way of looking at everything in life. The Torah teaches us that Hashem runs the world, and shows us how to deal with *simchah*, and how to cope with tragedy.

"All who have gathered here have tapped into this light of Torah, and we have been blessed by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to be a vehicle of bringing this light of Torah to the Philadelphia community. May it be Hashem's Will that all who are connected to the Torah should be able to bask in its glory, with the coming of Moshiach, *bimheirah biyameinu."*

Rabbi Biberfeld then presented the Young Leadership Award to Avi and Julie Zohar, praising them for their involvement in community institutions. "The Zohars are genuine people who blend *chessed* and community work with passion and simplicity. They act with a full heart, yet do so nonchalantly, without any desire for recognition."



L-R: Mr. Sid Laytin, president of Philadelphia Community Kollel; Harav Shmuel Kamenetsky, *shlita*, *Rosh Yeshivah,* Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia, and Mark Zohar, father of Avi Zohar, Young Leadership Award recipient.



Mr. Avi Zohar, recipient of the Young Leadership Award, at the Philadelphia Community Kollel's 13th annual dinner.

Rabbi Biberfeld also presented the award to Elliott and Amy Holtz, who are involved in many good causes on a local and national level. Elliott Holtz has recently become involved in several initiatives that have brought millions of dollars in government funding to the local day schools, providing tuition relief for many children.

Amy Holtz is the President of Jerusalem U., the leading producer and distributor of online courses and documentary films about Eretz Yisrael and Judaism, affiliated with Aish HaTorah.

Furthermore, the Holtzes are also a prime example of those who have come to *kollel* and have experienced substantial growth in Torah.

As Mr. Holtz stated while accepting his award, "Our lives have become steadily involved in the *kollel*, which continues to take us on a journey of Torah Judaism. The *kollel* plays an integral part in the community and in our lives. We thank the *kollel* and all its Rabbis who have redirected our lives, and continue to inspire us."