National Scholar Report: Bringing our Torah to Philadelphia

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel

Over the past month, I have served as a scholar-in-residence in two different communities in Philadelphia. Under the banner of our Institute, we are spreading our ideas throughout the country and beyond through such programs.

On the Shabbat of February 24-25, I visited Congregation Bnai Israel Ohev Zedek in suburban Northeast Philadelphia. The Shabbaton was co-sponsored by the Chelkeinu Initiative, a local organization that wishes to add a dimension of Modern Orthodox education into their communities. They invited our Institute as a productive partner with shared religious goals. Over the course of an exhilirating Shabbat, I spoke about Superstition, the need to have text-based learning in Megillat Esther, and what Sephardim and Ashkenazim can learn from one another in their prayers. The final talk was held on Saturday night, so that a wider range of people could drive to the event. The classes were extremely well-attended, and we were able to share our central values with that community.

On the Shabbat of March 17-18, I visitied Congregation Mekor Habracha in Center City, Philadelphia. At a community Shabbaton, I spoke about the idea of the Chosen People and Western Values, Biblical Miracles, and Dogma in Jewish Thought. The goal of each talk is to present a range of traditional views with an approach to understanding competing religious opinions. In the class on Dogma, the emphasis is on how to build a united traditional community when many of its members do not understand even the basic core Jewish beliefs. Once again, the Shabbaton was a huge success, and the talks generated many private conversations as well.

These scholar-in-residence weekends are uniquely valuable for promoting our deepest values to communities all over the United States.

Through these and so many related programs, we reach thousands of people per year. Thank you for your ongoing support of our Institute so that we may continue to engage a growing number of communities in learning.