

Around the Community

JEP/Nageela Hosts Challah Bake and Shabbos Kiddush

By Jen Reiz

The first Shabbos after Pesach called for a little extra motivation and excitement in the Five Towns. So JEP/Nageela stepped in to give dozens of mothers and daughters an inspirational boost to get their challah-making “skillz” cranking.

The event took place in Ohr Torah of North Woodmere on Thursday night. How was this challah bake different from all other challah bakes? For some of the girls, this was a whole new experience, they had never made a challah before.

One mother shyly asked why women are given a mitzvah to make challah, which led to a beautiful explanation about hafrashat challah

and women's roles in Judaism. The evening also coincided with Yom Hashoah so women and children were encouraged to light candles in dedication to those who perished in the Holocaust. An Israeli grandmother who accompanied her daughter and granddaughter said that she appreciated the event because “this generation needs to learn all these important things about our religion.”

It was a time to bond with family and to share in a key tradition. Attendees found all the ingredients for challah baking, including inspiration to create their challah works of art. Whether in the shape of a key to mark the parnassah symbol of the “shlissel” challah or just braided, many pounds of dough were lovingly handled to

welcome Shabbat with joy this past week.

The inspiration continued on Shabbos day as JEP/Nageela hosted a generous kiddush for Ohr Torah attendees after davening concluded. Dozens of families enjoyed the lavish spread and heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Wurem, COO of JEP/Nageela, on how to raise children with positivity. That is a value Camp Nageela gives its campers.

Thanks to Chaya Fiedler and Rochel Halpert for organizing and leading a successful evening and kiddush on Shabbos that will hopefully spur on more interest in Jewish-focused events by JEP/Nageela and its fun-filled Camp Nageela. For more information on how to be our KEYS for



success and support these efforts, please contact jenr@jepni.org or visit jepni.org/donate. Tizku l'mitzvot!

Jen Reiz is JEP/Nageela's Director of PR & Development.

Achiezer at 13: A Talk with Dr. Brucha Lowinger *Part 4 of a Series*

By Avi Shiff

In honor of Achiezer's 13th year, we are conducting a multi-part series celebrating the various facets of this remarkable organization. For Week #4, we spoke to Dr. Brucha Lowinger.

Thank you, Dr. Lowinger, for your time amidst your hectic schedule. For how many years have you worked for Achiezer?

Ten years.

What is your role at Achiezer?

I am the Mental Health Department Coordinator, responsible for anything mental health related. I deal with crisis intervention, referrals, consultations, and so on. Any issue that comes Achiezer's way that has a psychological component is sent to us. Achiezer has other departments and staff who deal with all types of family crises, and they refer to our department those matters which pertain to us.

What are some real-life examples of where Achiezer's involvement has made a difference?

Honestly, we're very careful not to recount specific scenarios, because people will often be able to identify

their situation, and we're so very careful and sensitive about confidentiality, so I don't want to get very specific. However, I will tell you that we've made an unbelievably positive impact on families dealing with challenges. We ensure that they are put in touch with the proper professionals and we address the related issues, such as financial and familial wellbeing, while at the same time ensuring that the mental health matters are dealt with completely and professionally. The various departments here at Achiezer meet as a group, so that we can brainstorm. Then, each of us, with our respective expertise, comes up with a plan for each family in crisis.

What is it like working with the rest of the outstanding staff and departments at Achiezer?

It's absolutely incredible. I will tell you that we all complement each other very well. No one stands on ceremony. Everyone is here to contribute what they can. We are each able to look at an issue and make our contribution from our point of view. And that's a wonderful part of Achiezer and what makes it so unique. We work harmoniously to tackle so many different needs in the community.

Can you comment on Achiezer's

growth over the last decade?

It's grown by leaps and bounds. There's no question about that. This organization has expanded along with the community's needs, based on what those particular needs are. It's been wonderful to watch this growth from up close over the last decade. People call us from all over, not just from the Far Rockaway and Five Towns area, even though that's where we are physically located.

Achiezer's reputation has grown and spread over time.

How has Covid-19 impacted what you do?

The calls definitely increased during the height of the coronavirus and since then. Mental health became a front-and-center issue in light of the anxiety people were dealing with. People were worried. They were dealing with isolation for weeks or months at a time. People were anxious about their children and themselves. Those who were already dealing with mental health issues found them exacerbated by Covid; being alone, dealing with health concerns and being faced with *parnassah* issues, insurance worries and the like compounded what was already a very stressful time. Achiezer was up the task, and we did all that we could



to be there for every member of the community who needed us.

Any final comment?

From my perspective, Achiezer provides a trusted resource for people to consult with in a very confidential and non-threatening manner, having somewhere to bring their concerns and issues to. I feel very gratified and honored to be able to provide that to people.

Achiezer has made a major impact on the community and on families, and it keeps growing as necessary to respond to the needs of the community.

Thank you, Dr. Lowinger, for all you do on behalf of Achiezer to help our community!