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# RKYHS Hosts Sephardic Heritage Day

THURSDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2015 05:45 BY JONAH BASH RKYHS SOPHOMORE   

Livingston—Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School hosted a Sephardic Heritage Day for its students on February 10th that included talks from leading Sephardic Rabbis, a feature film and, of course, authentic Sephardic delicacies.



PREV 1 of 2 NEXT

Kushner students began the day watching Sallah Shabati, a comical satire about a Mizrachi Jew who makes Aliyah. They were then addressed by Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, Rabbi of the Safra Synagogue in Manhattan, who spoke about the origin and significance of the Sephardic Community.

The students then separated into breakout sessions covering a wide variety of topics significant to Sephardic Jewry. Rabbi Moshe Tessone, professor at Yeshiva University, spoke about Sephardic liturgy and cantillation. Rabbi Dr. Abadie spoke once again, this time about his family's origins. One of the sessions was led by Yaffa Malashock, RKYHS Hebrew teacher, who spoke of her own Sephardic family's roots in Syria, Lebanon and Israel. Another session was led by Rabbi Dr. Pecaric, RKYHS Judaic faculty member, who spoke about Greek Jewry and the Holocaust.

During lunch students enjoyed traditional Sephardic foods such as lachmagine, kibbeh and Moroccan cigars.

The day concluded with a lecture by Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik, who is the Rabbi at the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue in Manhattan, the oldest Jewish congregation in the United States. Students especially enjoyed Rabbi Dr. Soloveichik's sense of humor. Following the speech students were led in a Sephardic-style mincha by one of Kushner's Sephardic students, Eytan Shamsian.

Although the school hosts a day to learn about different types of Jews annually, this one was student-initiated. Two Sephardic students, senior Jonathan Pedoeem and junior Jordan Shanskhailil, approached the administration asking if this year's program could focus on Sephardic Jewry. With help from Rabbi Chamudot, Sgan Rosh Yeshiva at RKYHS, the students made it happen.






"Jordan and I saw a need," Pedoeem explained. "We realized that most of our peers know little to almost nothing about Sephardic Jews and Jews from the Middle East. Given that both of us have parents from these countries, we took it into our own hands to educate our peers in order to maintain and remember our heritage."

Despite a two-hour delay due to inclement weather, all events for the day were able to take place. Students said they gained many insights that they would normally not have acquired in a traditional classroom setting.

"I learned a lot about Sephardic Jews and the origin of the Sephardic community," commented sophomore Yonatan Raskin.

Another sophomore, Gabe Maron said, "By learning about the contributions of the Sephardic community, I gained an appreciation for how the Sephardic community made an impact on the Jewish Community."

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