

FOR RAV MORDY AND LIMOR FRIEDMAN, IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

JLIC Educators Energize Orthodox Life at Penn

By Tova Ross

When Rabbi Mordy Friedman met his wife, Limor, the two were spending the summer as counselors in a religious leadership-training program. The program would apparently set the tone for their future career choices: they are currently the Heshe & Harriet Seif Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC) educators at the University of Pennsylvania, which houses one of the largest Orthodox communities on a secular campus in North America. The Orthodox community at Penn (nicknamed OCP, for Orthodox Community at Penn), which regularly draws about 300 students for Shabbat dinner and JLIC programs, is bigger than the Reform and Conservative communities on the campus.

Rav Mordy, as students refer to him, a Teaneck, New Jersey native, and Limor, a *sabra* from Netivot who was living in the States, made *aliyah* in 2003. The couple, who were serving as the Av and Eim Bayit (house father and mother) at Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi, had been considering going on *shlichut* (service abroad) for some time. In 2005, they were contacted by Rav Mordy's childhood friend and longtime *chavrutah* (study partner) Rabbi Yehuda Seif, who was leaving his position as the JLIC rabbi at Penn and thought the school would be a good match for the Friedmans. Rav Mordy and Limor made the journey to the Penn campus to see if it would be a good fit.

"As soon as we saw the campus," says Rav Mordy, "Limor and I knew that we wanted to be part of the warmth and camaraderie that is Penn's Orthodox Jewish community."

The Orthodox Union, in partnership with Hillel, oversees JLIC, a program that sends young "educator" couples to campuses throughout North America to help Orthodox students balance their Jewish commitments with their academic goals. JLIC couples foster Torah study, sponsor Jewish events and help create a Shabbat atmosphere on the largely secular campuses. JLIC is currently on fifteen campuses, including Yale, Cornell and Johns Hopkins University. (Harvard is expected to become a JLIC campus in the fall.)

At Penn, the Friedmans make a concerted effort to get to know the students. They often invite students into their home; they live just two blocks from Penn's Hillel with their almost five-year-old daughter, Noa, and son, Yedidya, who is a few months old.

"Rav Mordy and Limor took great strides to get to know everyone in the community, and forge a connection with them," says Amanda Sugarman, a Penn junior who served as co-chair of the OCP last year. "The Friedmans started working on the campus during my freshman year, and immediately welcomed me into their home and made it known that they were here to assist me in my adjustment."

Aside from making themselves available to students, Rav Mordy and Limor host Shabbat meals

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The Friedmans serve as the JLIC couple at the University of Pennsylvania. Courtesy of the Friedmans