

**SOUTH DAKOTA**

# Jewish Update

**DECEMBER 2022 | ISSUE 10  
CHANUKAH 5783, YEAR OF HAKHEL**



## from Rabbi Mendel's Desk

**A**s we prepare to celebrate our seventh Chanukah in South Dakota, I'm thinking about the significance of "seven." In Judaism, the number seven symbolizes a complete cycle; there are seven days in a week, and the Biblical Sabbatical year is observed every seventh year. Immediately after the seventh comes the eighth, which must always spur us to increased activity and vibrance.

This just gives us all more to be thankful for as we celebrate Chanukah this year, and look to an even brighter future of increased Jewish knowledge and pride in our beautiful state.

When we look at the story of Chanukah, we realize that the main thrust of Chanukah was not about the physical persecution of the Jews, but of the banning of our faith observances.

The Greeks were puzzled by the Jews insistence that the Torah was given by G-d, and that therefore its instructions are holy and eternal. If you want to live with cultural traditions that your ancestors brought along from a desert, the Greeks reasoned, wonderful, but please don't attribute all this holiness, spirituality and G-dliness to it.

Had the Jews simply agreed to forgo the Shabbat, Brit, Kosher, Family Purity, and modify some of the temple observances to include aspects foreign to the tradition, the Greeks would have left us alone, and everyone would have lived happily ever after.

But that would not have been Judasim.

So thankfully, the Macabbes stood up and proudly

said no. Although they were initially a small minority, as even many Jews succumbed to the Hellenistic ways, this small group prevailed.

They showed that to be victorious, you don't need many, you don't need might. You need to be right, and eventually you will prevail and others will join you. It was a victory of right over wrong, of light over the dark. And thanks to those brave people, we have Judaism today as we did back then, and we have Chanukah to celebrate.

Just like the Maccabees of old, the best way we can ensure our children and grandchildren will be Jewish, the way our ancestors were, is for us to be educated about who we are. When we know who we are, we are also more likely to be proud of who we are.

This year, the Menorah lights will shine extra brightly across South Dakota, with increased Jewish pride and celebration, as we have provided a menorah and candles to every Jewish home in need of one around the state. This of course is in addition to the many, many homes who light the candles each night, and the beautiful public displays of menorahs in Sioux Falls, Pierre and Rapid City.

Numerous people have told me how meaningful it is for them when they see the large public menorahs on display. For Jewish people it is a symbol of our faith and tradition, for the broader community it is a universal symbol of American freedom, and an expression of the beautiful diversity and how welcome we are in our beloved city and state.

**Rabbi Mendel Alperowitz**

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*Alevy Chabad House*

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# Will My Grandchildren Be Jewish?

by Aron Moss

## Question:

I fear for the future of the Jewish people. When I look at my family and where they are headed it is not very promising. My grandfather was a rabbi, but I am not sure my grandchildren will even be Jewish. What is the secret to keeping Judaism alive?

## Answer:

I have yet to meet a Jew who doesn't proudly claim, "My grandfather was a rabbi." It seems that three generations ago everyone was a rabbi.

What they really mean is that their grandfather was an observant Jew. He probably had a beard, prayed every day, and was knowledgeable in Torah. He may have been a cobbler

or merchant or baker, but he was a committed Jew.

Anyone who identifies as Jewish today only need go back three or four generations to find observant Jews in their family. And from there an unbroken chain of Jewish living that goes back more than three thousand years. Not that everyone has always been observant. There were plenty of unobservant Jews. But we don't know their grandchildren. They have been lost to the Jewish community.

Jewishness without Jewish observance cannot last more than a couple of generations. Unless they return to living Jewishly, the children of unobservant Jews will stop being Jewish altogether and assimilate. A family of unobservant

Jews will lose one or the other - either the Jewishness, or the unobservance. You can't have both.

This is not a new phenomenon. Throughout Jewish history there have been individuals and groups who tried to keep a Jewish identity without Jewish practice. It has never worked. A vague Jewish ethnic feeling, devoid of any spiritual purpose and with no compelling message that is relevant to life, cannot last long. Only proud and authentic Judaism, that offers relevance and meaning, direction and inspiration, will stand the test of time.

In the times of the Chanukah story, a small band of faithful Jews stood up against the vast majority of Jews who subscribed to Hellenism, the Greek way of life. We celebrate Chanukah today because we descend from those faithful few.

The solution to Jewish continuity is no secret, it's obvious. Living breathing Judaism produces living breathing Jews. Do for your grandchildren what your grandfather did for you - be a living example of what it means to live a vibrant Jewish life. They don't need their grandfather to be a rabbi, but they need him to be a proud and practicing Jew.



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# Letters



*Thank you for hosting us on Shabbos... it was sooo special! Your family is beautiful and what the two of you are doing in South Dakota is so important and not an easy task... but I always say nothing worthwhile is easy!!*

MARSHA RIHCMAN



*Dear Mussie, I love you! Thank you for circle time.*

C.G.



*I received the birthday Tzedakah box and have it on our dining room table. We are already putting gelt in it. Thank you for thinking of me, and I'd love to set a time to place a mezuzah.*

DOUG & KATHY GERASH



*Thank you so very much for the beautiful Tzedakah box. I brought it to work this morning and have pulled out a bunch of quarters to put one in every day that I am here. I recognize that this is not the only tzedakah that I will do but doing this action everyday will remind me of all of the blessings that surround me. I am so truly blessed. Again thank you for the box and for all that you are doing for the Jewish community in Sioux Falls and South Dakota.*

STEPHEN ROSENTHAL



*Thank you for including me in your weekly note. This information is most interesting, as well as educational, uplifting, and hopeful. Savor the important learning that surrounds you this weekend and the affirmation of being one among thousands of other Chabad Rabbis from across the globe. May you strive for all that is good and help this world find peace.*

ANN HENKIN



*Thank you for the example your family is to our Sioux Falls community. We appreciate all you do in the state of South Dakota. The area certainly needs a revived Jewish presence. You make exemplary ambassadors of Judaism and we are especially grateful to you for the solid Torah teachings and how to honor shabbat.*

CARRIE & WILLIAM GOLDBERG



## CHANUKAH MESSAGE from THE REBBE *Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of righteous memory*

Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, recalls the victory—more than 2100 years ago—of a militarily weak but spiritually strong Jewish people over the mighty forces of a ruthless enemy that had overrun the Holy Land and threatened to engulf the land and its people in darkness.

The miraculous victory—culminating with the rededication of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem and the rekindling of the Menorah which had been desecrated and extinguished by the enemy—has been celebrated annually ever since during these eight days of Chanukah, especially by lighting the Chanukah Menorah, also as a symbol and message of the triumph of freedom over oppression, of spirit over matter, of light over darkness.

It is a timely and reassuring message, for the forces of darkness are ever present. Moreover, the danger does not come exclusively from outside; it often lurks close to home, in the form of insidious erosion of time-honored values and principles that are at the foundation of any decent human society. Needless to say, darkness is not chased away by brooms and sticks, but by illumination. Our Sages said, "A little light expels a lot of darkness."

The Chanukah Lights remind us in a most obvious way that illumination begins at home, within oneself and one's family, by increasing and intensifying the light of the Torah and Mitzvos in the everyday experience, even as the Chanukah Lights are kindled in growing numbers from day to day. But though it begins at home, it does not stop there. Such is the nature of light that when one kindles a light for one's own benefit, it benefits also all who are in the vicinity. Indeed, the Chanukah Lights are expressly meant to illuminate the "outside," symbolically alluding to the duty to bring light also to those who, for one reason or another, still walk in darkness.

What is true of the individual is true of a nation, especially this great United States, united under G-d, and generously blessed by G-d with material as well as spiritual riches. It is surely the duty and privilege of this Nation to promote all the forces of light both at home and abroad, and in a steadily growing measure.

Let us pray that the message of the Chanukah Lights will illuminate the everyday life of everyone personally, and of the society at large, for a brighter life in every respect, both materially and spiritually.

LAG B'OMER COMMUNITY BB'Q



SUSHI IN THE SUKKAH



WOMEN'S CIRCLE



SUKKAH IN RAPID CITY



SEFER TORAH WRITING DEMO



MEZUZAH & TEFILLIN





## Mussie's Musings

*G-d Is Not a Vending Machine*

Parenthood has made me think more deeply about many things I used to not think much about. Including prayer and my understanding of prayer. Coming off the heels of the High Holidays, I've been thinking about prayer a lot.

When it came time to introduce my children to the concept of prayer, that they have a loving G-d, that wants the best for them, and they only need to pray, to ask, for all their needs, and thank Him for all their blessings. I struggled with this. I worried about taking the innocence away from them. What happens that first time they will inevitably ask for some elaborate wish or something truly important and get the proverbial "no"? How will they be able to reconcile that not always will they get what they want but that doesn't mean that same loving G-d, who is the one running the world and in charge of it all, will say "No" and somehow, it really is still good.

Obviously, I had work to do on my own understanding of prayer, my relationship with G-d, and accepting the disappointments or challenges in life while still being able to still see G-d as one who does only good. I'm sure I'm not the only one with low disappointment tolerance?

A recent conversation with a friend, and a discussion we had about another aspect of parenting, really crystalized and clarified this question for me.

She reminded me that oftentimes in parenting, we parents will make a boundary, but then the inevitable kvetching, nonstop requests, and demands of our children will sometimes cause us

to rethink our decisions, and re-evaluate the boundaries we've made. This does not necessarily mean that we are 'giving in' to our children's demands, or that they "have us wrapped around their finger." It can simply be a healthy exercise of the flexibility of thought and principle, of not stubbornly sticking to boundaries that might have been set without all the right facts on hand. Sometimes the situation can change and that can demand new solutions. This is true about matters big and small, when it's about a chocolate bar after a poorly eaten dinner, a gymnastics class, or what time bedtime is.

I'd like to think this is true about prayer too, our spiritual parent, G-d, wants to hear from us. He may have a plan for us. And it may be a good one. But sometimes it doesn't look good to us, and we can ask for changes, we can beg, relentlessly, just like our children, for even the most unrealistic of requests, and G-d who can do absolutely anything, even splitting the sea, may choose to re-evaluate His boundary, His plan, and maybe make some changes.

Like my wise aunt likes to say, G-d is not a vending machine, we don't stick a coin in and get what we want, we make our desires and needs clear, and He, who truly has our best interests at heart, makes His decision based on His knowledge of the bigger picture.

Wishing for all my friends to have their prayers answered. With Chanukah, the holiday of unnatural miracles coming up, we can have high hopes. As my favorite menorah lighting prayer goes: Sheasah neeseem la'avoteinoo, bayamim haheim, oo'bezman hazeh. May miracles happen just like they did in those days, in these times too.

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## Sightings & Sayings

*Jewish Life in Sioux Falls in the 50's*  
By Mike Turchen

I was born in Sioux Falls in 1942, after my parents moved here in 1930. When I was a young child, my dad served in WWII, and fought in the Battle of Okinawa. He was also one of the first soldiers to fly into Japan when they signed the armistice agreement after the Japanese surrendered.

When I was growing up in Sioux Falls, there were two congregations, Sons of Israel, and Mt. Zion, where I had my Bar Mitzvah.

My mother was active in Hadassah, and my father was active in Bnei Brith.

Some of the families in the community were Hans and Joyce Nauen, and their children, including Charlie and Elinor, who I was friends with, as well as the Margulis's.

As a youngster, I sold Kosher Dill Pickles while my friends sold newspapers. I'll never forget the time that Hans showed me his yellow star that he had brought with him from Europe when he escaped.

With such a vibrant Jewish community, there were enough Jewish boys that we had our own high school basketball team. As a youngster, I was with my dad when he coached the AZA basketball team. Bill Zabel was on the team. Unfortunately, it was not without anti-semitic incident. I remember one time the referee made unfair calls against the AZA team, so my dad took us off the court and said he won't put up with that. Thankfully, the Y director realized

what had happened and agreed this was uncalled for and was able to put a stop to it.

I also remember Sam Fantle, who was just a little older than me, and who tragically lost his life while serving in Vietnam. He was an Air Force jet pilot, who was shot down.

My grandparents were traditional Jews, and they kept Kosher. When they came to visit us, we did our best to accommodate them with paper plates and disposable cutlery. They would also build a Sukkah each year for the holiday.



Sukkot 2022 in Hill City, SD.

My parents lived in Sioux Falls until 1972, before moving to Phoenix for retirement. They had become friends with Bernice Schotten and her late husband Peter, who they would stay by whenever they visited after their move.

Lesta and I lived in Mitchell from 1972-92 where we both taught at Dakota Wesleyan.

During my life, I've been very fortunate to have the opportunity to travel and learn about different people and different cultures. The word "Rabbi" means teacher, and all the rabbis I have crossed paths with in Sioux Falls were good teachers and fine people, Rabbi's Richter, Szenes, Hibshman and Forstein.

I remember when I visited Israel, our guide was the father of a Muslim

student who I had taught at Dakota Wesleyan. When we toured the north, an Israeli sergeant let us cross briefly into Lebanon. But going to the Western Wall for the first time was very very moving and the most inspiring. I prayed for good health and long life for my parents, and thankfully both were fulfilled.

Since 2004 I have been living in Hill City where we dedicate time and energy to the South Dakota State Railroad Museum and Dakota Wesleyan.

I also enjoy participating in the services hosted by the Synagogue of the Hills, and connecting with the Jewish community in Sioux Falls and across the state through the great work of Chabad. There are so few of us in the state, and it is especially meaningful when we can be connected with each other through our shared heritage and sacred traditions. Having lived in South Dakota for so many years, seeing the Jewish growth and vibrance Rabbi Mendel & Mussie are bringing, is heartwarming.

I was recently speaking with my sister Phyllis, and I told her how fortunate we were to grow up in a warm Jewish family where our faith and traditions played a key role in our lives.

That's also why it means so much to me that Rabbi Mendel comes out to visit with me at my home, each time celebrating the holidays with me. Together we've made the blessings on the Lulav and Etrog, lit the Menorah, placed a Mezuzah and more. Having these opportunities makes me feel even more connected with my people, with my parents and grandparents, and with our history. It brings me back to my childhood and it's a return to roots.

*Sam Fantle  
tragically lost his  
life while serving  
in Vietnam*



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