

SOUTH DAKOTA

Jewish Update

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SHAVUOT 5783, YEAR OF HAKHEL

from
**Rabbi
Mendel's
Desk**

A dear friend recently told me he was organizing an event for Jewish awareness on campus. I was eager to assist, and asked what he had in mind. When he mentioned the theme of anti semitism and the Holocaust, and hosting the event around the Kristallnacht anniversary, I felt somewhat disappointed.

Why not an event on Chanukah or Purim, or an event in general on what the Torah is and what Judaism teaches, I thought?

If students were going to have one opportunity for Jewish awareness, it should be about what Judaism actually is, not the hardships that others have directed at us.

As the only rabbi living in South Dakota it is not uncommon for me to be contacted by the media, and one of the first questions I'm asked is about antisemitism. But we are not victims. We have a beautiful rich history, a dazzling present and a very promising future. We have Torah and mitzvahs. The big question is, are we as parents adequately sharing that with our children?

This is also a question we must ask ourselves when it comes to prioritizing community funds and time-resources.

Should funds be used to build monuments, and education focus on the past atrocities that have affected our people? Or should the priority be to build shuls and schools, and our teachers put their greatest emphasis on what it means to live as an educated and proud Jew today, and into the future?

To me, the answer is obvious.

What's more, history demonstrates that excessive focus on antisemitism is not helpful either. It won't do much to quash antisemitism, nor will it do anything to sustain a future generation of living Jews. Constantly kvetching will not create happy Jews. Yet for too many, this is the overarching narrative heard from

teachers, parents and at the pulpit.

We need to reorientate our focus. As the Rebbe once said, instead of thinking "es is shver tzu zayn a yid (it's difficult to be a Jew)" we should realize "es is gut tzu zayn a yid (it's great to be a Jew!)."

Each one of us must take responsibility for the future of the Jewish people. Not to sit back and wait, not to cry about the past, but to be proactive and go on the offensive in strengthening Judaism, and sharing its beauty with our children and them with theirs. Our non-Jewish friends too, appreciate learning more about who we are, not just hearing about the difficulties our ancestors faced.

Throughout our history, there has been one thing that has kept us together. Not our language; we have spoken every language. Not our country; we have been citizens in many countries. Not our foods; Sephardim and Ashkenazim have always had a spicy variety.

The Torah and mitzvahs which we all received, equally, and have kept the same, has served as the eternal bond of our unity. A Jew of any country of origin, who speaks any language, can walk into any Shul anywhere in the world, and the Torah and mitzvahs will be the exact same!

This is where our focus must be.

We must thank G-d for giving us the great blessing of living in America, where the overwhelming majority of her citizens love and respect us as Jews, and where we have the opportunity to be educated and proud Jews in ways our grandparents and great-grandparents could have only dreamed of.

If this Shavuot, as we receive the Torah anew, we resolve to strengthen our knowledge of Judaism, and observance of mitzvahs, proudly and authentically, that would be the best guarantee for a vibrant Jewish continuity.

Rabbi Mendel Alperowitz



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SHAVUOT MESSAGE

from **THE REBBE**

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

On the last day of his life, Moses inscribed the Torah on parchment scrolls. This written Torah was preceded by an engraved Torah: forty years earlier, at Mount Sinai, the Divine law was given to us in the form of the Ten Commandments etched by the hand of G-d in two tablets of stone.

When something is written, the substance of the letters that express it - the ink - remains a separate entity from the substance upon which they have been set - the parchment. On the other hand, letters engraved in stone are forged in it: the words are stone and the stone in words.

This is an aspect of Torah that is "inked" on our soul: we understand it, our emotions are aroused by it; it becomes our lifestyle or even our "personality"; but it remains something additional to our selves.

Then there is the quintessential self. At the core of every Jew, the spark of G-dliness remains constant, unchangeable and unaffected. This is a dimension of Torah that is engraved in our being and expresses a bond with G-d that is the very essence of the Jewish soul.

Let us access our true, innate selves this Shavuot, and accept the Torah's engraving on our hearts.



Letters

“

Thank you so much for the lovely gift of the box of shmura matzah! It was quite unexpected and most timely for our household. G-d bless you in all you do in South Dakota to propagate our faith. As Jews, we need the teachings of the Rebbe to continue here in the hinterlands, and not just at 770 Eastern Parkway!

GREGORY GILES

“

Thank you for your Jewish example to our community. It wasn't easy for me to move from Canada's large Jewish community to a state with so few Jews, yet your pioneering spirit is a real inspiration to us.

CARRIE GOLDBERG

“

Your email message this week was beautiful. It really touches on the heart of life.

BERNARD & MARTHA
BALABAN

“

We are happy to know that in this sparsely populated area of America people are now able to know about what it means to be Jewish and to celebrate with you.

SHEILA & JERROLD WOLFSET

“

I am so grateful to have been invited to the Seder. It was amazing! Every beautiful detail was so meaningful and exceptional. Thank you for all you do.

LEAH GOSSOM

“

Thank you for inviting me to what was an amazing and an incredible evening! I had a great time meeting new friends and celebrating this important holiday.

AUSTIN BENSON

“

We were just talking about Chabad and Jim told me he has never been this thirsty for knowledge. Thank you to you and Mussie for always welcoming us and teaching us

BEVERLY CHRISTENSEN

“

The planning and organizing and hard work to put on such a big and kosher event, is truly impressive. The festive and inclusive atmosphere, with the little children singing the mah nishtanah was so inspirational, not to say adorable.

BERNICE SCHOTTEN



Mussie's Musings

What The Rebbe Means To Me

*Written in honor of
Gimmel Tammuz.*

Above the fireplace in the center of my home, hangs a large photo of the Rebbe. It's always fun to predict the conversations that arise. "Who is that? Your Grandfather? Oh, a Rabbi?"

At times, I try to step back with the eyes of an outsider and look at it from their perspective. I wonder if for one that has never heard of him, is it hard to understand why we mention the Rebbe's teachings in virtually every Torah class, Friday email and newsletter? From our lifestyle and career choices, to our children's names, does anyone wonder why the Rebbe is so dear, and central?

We may not have heard a voice from Heaven, but do we really need that?"

Our reverence for the Rebbe, and having a Rebbe in our life, is really nothing new. Learning Jewish history, one discovers that in each generation and time period, we have always had a great Jewish leader. From Moses, to King David, Devorah the Judge, to Mordechai in Persia, and Maimonides, there was always that one individual, that stood as the moral compass and leader to tend to the specific spiritual and material needs of the Jewish people of their times.

What makes a Jewish leader? There is a common thread the Torah records about the early life of Moses and King David. The midrash goes into detail describing how when Moses was out with a herd of sheep, a young sheep wandered away from the flock, oblivious to the dangers that lurked. Moses ran after the sheep, noticed it had found some water, understood that it was thirsty and tired, and lifted it and brought it back to the flock. Definitely not a business minded decision.

About King David, the Torah describes how he calculated carefully which sheep

were brought out to feed first, the youngest without teeth to eat the soft grass, the oldest to eat after the young, and finally the strongest sheep, to eat the toughest grass, last.

When G-d saw how David tended to the individual needs of his diverse sheep, and how Moses looked after the sidelined, forgotten, and lost sheep, that's when He knew He had found a leader for His people. This is what G-d defined as a Jewish leader.



June 1991. Although only a child, the Rebbe made time for me. Here I am receiving a dollar bill from him, for me to give to charity. "When two people meet, a third should also benefit," the Rebbe often said.

There have been many movers and shakers in the Jewish world, both in our times, and in the centuries prior. What is unique about the Rebbe goes beyond his influence, personality and scholarship, which fills over 400 published volumes, it is the responsibility he took for all of the Jewish people and the world entire.

Whether it was a solitary Jew in Zambia or the Prime Minister of Israel showing up at his office, whether it was the scholars that wanted to discuss obscure topics in Judaism, or the young children marching in Jewish pride parades, whether it was the Jews behind the Iron Curtain, the orphans who needed a bar-mitzvah, the brave IDF soldiers on the front lines, the Rebbe considered all of that his responsibility. Just like Moses took care of that wayward sheep, the Rebbe, a faithful shepherd, tended to his flock. Notably, his efforts were not limited to the global Jewish community alone. The Rebbe strongly advocated for better education for all people, launched a campaign for a more ethical humanity, and wound up being a

mentor to influential social and political non Jewish leaders.

The USPS once shared that only the Governor's mansion in New York received more mail than the Rebbe, and yet he still found the time in his late eighties, to stand for hours on end to personally greet each of the thousands of men, women and children who would come to meet him each Sunday, to listen to their requests, to bless them and give each one a dollar to give charity. I have several such dollar bills that I hold dear till today.

You and I may not have heard a voice from heavens saying that the Rebbe is the quintessential Jewish leader of our times, but, do we really need that?

Although I met the Rebbe as a toddler, I in fact, don't remember it! In the years since his passing, there were many times I wished I could ask the Rebbe's advice on an important moment or decision in my life. Though we can no longer do so, his guidance lives on in the many correspondence and teachings he has left us. It is to these teachings and correspondence that our family looks to, and our lives are so enriched as a result.

Having a leader like the Rebbe, is a special gift from G-d to us."

Having a leader like the Rebbe, is a special gift from G-d to us. A righteous and selfless human being that dedicated his life to guide us as individuals and a people as a whole, both in material and spiritual matters. His inspiration is here for the taking as they say, and I encourage you to discover, tap in, and reap the benefits.



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Sightings & Sayings

*From Florida
to South Dakota*
By Michael Stuart

I was born and raised in New York City. My education was essentially public school, except for 4th grade when my family sent me to Yeshiva Torah V'Daas. That year changed my life forever. At age 19, I went to Israel for a 6 month kibbutz ulpan. I went through university and eventually became an educator. My wife, Harriett, is a native Floridian, from Miami.

Last September, my wife and son and I made the unlikely journey from Florida to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We moved to be closer to our daughter Jessica, and grandchildren who had settled here previously. We were also seeking opportunities for my thirty-one year old son, Aaron, who has autism.

*Our son was
diagnosed
with profound
autism at age 3*

With G-d's blessing we safely made the journey of over a thousand miles; no small undertaking considering the immense difficulties autism can present along the way. Sioux Falls was one of the last places I would have expected to find Chabad, so one can imagine my delightful surprise when my daughter informed us of its presence here, and that my grandchildren were enrolled in the Jewish preschool.

We settled in quickly, just in time for

the famous South Dakota winter... one of the most difficult, we are told, in many years. So be it. This made it especially wonderful for my wife and I to be welcomed and experience the warmth of Chabad, and have the opportunity to attend a beautiful seder this past Pesach, with my daughter and granddaughter next to us.

But, now there is work for us as we endeavor to create a future for our son, and others like him, who are developmentally or intellectually-challenged, and will need daily supervision for the rest of their lives.

Our son was diagnosed with profound autism at age 3. He had no speech at the time. We entered immediately into a program to assist his development, and Chabad of Plantation, Florida, allowed us to use their facility to help teach him developmental skills.

In 2015, we created a unique life-skills and work- skills training program for those like our son who were more-heavily challenged in their disabilities. With my experience as an educator, and the help of HaShem, Operation Meaningful Life was born; committed to serving those who had no skills and no hope for the future....those rejected by many training programs as being "too severe."

My son's potential revealed itself immediately as he began to experience a sense of self-worth and purpose in his life. I have a particularly touching memory of how during a celebration of Simchat Torah, during a lot of dancing, two of the Chabad rabbis took each of Aaron's hands and danced with him in their circle. Aaron loved it and

smiled through the whole dance. It was remarkable.

To add to the burden of raising a child with such disabilities, there is a critical need for, and shortage of, appropriate residential options for these individuals whom G-d Himself calls us to love. They are the hidden segment of our population that includes Down Syndrome and the mentally-disabled.

*My wife and I
were welcomed
by the warmth
of Chabad*



M'dor L'dor. At the Seder with Harriett, our daughter Jessica, and our granddaughter.

Hashem is present in every single one of them; and when they smile, we are seeing the pleasure and presence of G-d. My wife and I are now looking for a few other families who understand the critical needs of their disabled loved ones, and would like to join us in obtaining a life-long residential setting where our children could thrive every day and live a meaningful, productive life. It is not too difficult. It is just a matter of saying "yes" ...to those whom G-d has called us to love.

Chabad is not the same without you!

*Participate today
in any of the
following ways:*

- 1 Join a weekly Torah class!
- 2 Volunteer to distribute holiday packages!
- 3 Attend an inspiring Shabbat service and enjoy a Kiddush lunch!

- 4 Send your child to Gan Early Learning Center or JUDA!
- 5 Join the Women's Circle!
- 6 Join the Chai Club!

Do You Really Believe That the Torah Is Historical?

by Aron Moss

Did you hear the joke about the recent study on frogs? Scientists took a sample of over 100 frogs of various species and did the following test:

They placed each frog on a table, crept up behind it and shouted, "Jump!" The frog jumped.

Then they cut off one leg, and again shouted jump. It jumped, although not as far.

They then cut off a second leg and told it to jump, and then a third, each time observing that the frog responded, but jumped smaller distances.

Finally they cut off the fourth leg and again shouted "Jump!" They were amazed to find that in every case the

result was the same. The frog did not move at all.

The conclusion: When you cut off a frog's legs, it goes deaf. It is scientifically proven.



We all come to the conclusions that we want to believe. When the experts find that the Torah is too advanced for its time, they conclude it must have been written later than claimed. When I study Torah, I conclude that it is still ahead of its time, because it was written by G-d for all times and all places. Even the

Many have tried to prove or disprove the Torah's divinity. Neither attempt will be successful

parts that seem archaic and outdated, when explained on a deeper level, have powerful messages that I often feel are speaking directly to me. They are relevant and inspiring to me, right here, right now.

Many have tried to either prove or disprove the Torah's

G-d has given you a mission. How you respond is totally up to you

divinity. Neither attempt will be

successful. G-d wants us to have free choice. If we listen to His word, it is not by force. To maintain balance, there will always be valid arguments to discredit Him and His Torah. We can choose to buy those arguments, or see beyond them. Then, when we open ourselves to the Torah's message, the choice to do so is coming from within.

G-d has given you a mission. How you respond is totally up to you. You can

be as deaf as a legless frog, or you can take a leap in response to your higher calling.



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SOUTH DAKOTA
Jewish Update

CHABAD INVITES YOU TO JOIN WITH COMMUNITY,
FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO

CELEBRATE
SHAVUOT
FOR THE 3,335TH TIME!

SUNDAY MAY 26 5:00 PM

HEAR THE TEN COMMANDMENTS READ FROM THE
TORAH AND ENJOY A GOURMET DAIRY BUFFET

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