

June 2017 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

This time of year is indeed exciting to those of us who put so much time and effort into the students of our [Mike Weiner School of Jewish Learning](#). Not only are we about to wrap up another wonderful year, but, in connection with Shavuot, this is also when we celebrate our rising 11th Graders by giving them the public opportunity to confirm their personal and communal commitments to continued Jewish life.

It is no accident that Confirmation takes place at the time of Shavuot, because this is the holiday when we thank God for having entered us into our national covenant by way of the Ten Commandments.

About the giving of the Commandments, Rabbi Mordechai Katz, Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland during the middle part of the last century asks the question: Why, of all places, did God choose the wilderness as the setting for this miraculous gift? Answering his own question, Rabbi Katz writes, “Just as the desert contains nothing but layers of sand, so, too, the human body is composed of nothing but dust. But, just as the desert was transformed into a holy place by the appearance of the Divine Presence, so, too, with human beings.” The same, I would say, goes for us, the sacred community of the JCNWJ.

We may be surrounded, as it were, by a “desert” of Jewish life in Warren County, but when we come together as a community, we too are transformed by the Divine Presence. And that is exactly what has been happening Sunday after Sunday at 115 Youmans Avenue. We may be small, but so too are we mighty. As the 5777 school-year comes to a close, I’m honored for the opportunity to offer public thanks to those who have made it possible to have such great learning week after week.

First, to our wonderful teachers:

- To Debbie Fesinstine – we thank you for corralling the voices of angels so beautifully and with such enthusiasm.
- To Adam Tucker – we thank you for sharing your professional expertise and passion for learning with our older students.
- To Suzi Marr – we thank you not only for caring so much about our younger students as they enter the study of Hebrew, but also for bringing your whole creative self to so many all-school crafts and cooking projects.
- To Marsha Gross and Teri Stanton – we thank you for stepping in as needed from time to time to help in any way we ask.
- To all our fabulous *madrichim* (teaching assistants) – we thank you for carving time from your busy school schedules in order to give back to the community that nurtured you in so many ways for so many years.

And to our wonderful volunteer leaders:

- To Deb Kalisher – we thank you for making sure we were able to keep the process moving forward over the course of the year by organizing the community day in and day out, even when sometimes you were unable to be with us physically to enjoy the fruits of your efforts.
- To Marci Braunstein – we thank you for being the master of all details, ensuring that the school always had everything (and everybody) that we needed to bring success to our learning. We thank you also for taking the lead in organizing our Confirmation activities.
- To all our Mike Weiner School of Jewish Learning Parents (including *madrichim* parents) – We thank you for bringing your children each week and for staying with us for the first hour of all-school learning. Your presence has had enormously positive effects on the learning experience of your children. We thank you also for always providing food for communal seders and parties, and for setting up and cleaning up afterwards. Our school couldn't succeed without you.

Because of the work of each and every one of these spectacularly dedicated individuals, we have been able at the JCNWJ to keep our children focused on fulfilling their primary job on earth – which is to create and maintain space in which we are ready to welcome the Divine Presence, no matter how we choose to define what that means. In doing so, we have succeeded in transforming our own little spot within the Jewish “desert” of Warren County into a true home of Jewish life.

Todah l'Kulam (Sincere Thanks to Everyone),
Rabbi Dubin

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