

June 2018 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote in his 1955 book, *The Insecurity of Freedom*:

“At all religious schools, pupils are taught the benediction to be said before drinking a beverage. It is taught as a custom, a practice. But how many teachers attempt to convey the grand mystery and spiritual profundity contained in these three Hebrew words: *shehakol neheyah bidvaro*, meaning, ‘Everything came into being by God’s word’? It is unfair and unfortunate that we ignore, withhold, or fail to communicate the spiritual substance of our tradition.

The Hebrew term for education (*hinukh*) means not only to train, but also to dedicate, to consecrate. And to consecrate the child must be our goal, difficult as it may be. The survival of the Jewish people is our basic concern. But what kind of survival, we must continually ask, and for what purpose?”

I am proud to say that when it comes to the sacred work we do at the [Mike Weiner School of Jewish Learning](#), Heschel’s concerns need not worry us, because what we do on a weekly basis is precisely what he calls us to do. While our children do, of course, learn prayers and Torah and music and history and Hebrew, simply conveying this knowledge for the sake of knowledge is hardly our goal. The reason we spend so much time and effort sharing this Jewish knowledge is that we see it as a set of tools that is able to “communicate the spiritual substance of our tradition.”

The truth, however, is that we go even a step further than what Heschel advocates, because not only do we communicate the spiritual substance, and not only do we engage in the active process of consecrating our children, but we actually do something that I believe is even more important. **We help our young people claim ownership over their own Jewish selves.** Our ambition is for them to develop the tools necessary, so they will grow into committed Jews who are able and eager to make the active and personal choice to apply the spiritual substance of our tradition to their own unique circumstances and thereby come to live lives that truly are worthy of being called “sacred.”

To be clear, Judaism does not enjoy the single exclusive map to goodness. There are many worthy paths to righteousness, some are based in faith, and some are not. On the other hand, I also know that we, as Jews, are the beneficiary of a sacred tradition that is profoundly capable of leading us to make our world a better place.

It has been the profound honor of our entire teaching team to focus our students at every opportunity on the treasure trove that is “Jewish Values.” What follows is just a

small sampling of the principles we have discussed over the course of 5778. You will notice that I list them in alphabetical order. This is because I find it next to impossible to prioritize one over the others. In order for us to live the best Jewish lives we can, every single value is “the most important.”

- *Ahavat ha-Shem* – Love of God
- *Ahavat Re'a* – Love of Neighbor
- *Ahavat Yisrael* - Love of the Jewish people
- *Anava* – Humility
- *Chinuch* – Education and study
- *Emet* – Truth
- *Gemilut Hasadim* – Kindness/compassion
- *Hakhnasat Orhim* – Welcoming guests/strangers
- *Herut* – Freedom
- *Kavod* – Respect
- *Kedusha* – Holiness
- *Kehillah* –Community
- *Limmud ha-Torah* – Study of Torah
- *Menschlichkeit* – Decency toward others
- *Ometz Lev* – Courage
- *Rahamanut* – Compassion
- *Shalom* – Peace
- *Pikuah Nefesh* – Sanctity of life
- *Shalom Bayit* – Peace in the home
- *Shemirat Lashon* – Sanctity of language
- *Tikkun Olam* – Improving the world
- *Tikvah* – Hope
- *T'fillah* – Sanctity through prayer and ritual
- *Tzedakah* – Justice/responsibility
- *Zikaron* – Remembrance

This is just a portion of the Jewish values that we have helped the young people of our congregation consider, learn, and internalize over the course of this year. There are more. Too many, in fact, to offer a complete list here. Our tradition is just that rich.

It is my honor in this most public of forums, to recognize and thank everyone who has made our year so fruitful. As with the values mentioned above, I will list our team of educators in alphabetical order, because this has been a full team effort. No one person has been more important than any other. In addition, though it is true that some have shared expertise in particular areas, such as Hebrew or music or crafts or administrative coordination, the fact is that so many do so much that it is nearly impossible to narrow down what we teach to just one or two things. What is true,

however, is that our entire team has been dedicated to the same ultimate goal, which is to grow Jews who will have the capacity and inclination to live lives of sacred goodness. And so, I offer the names of our Mike Weiner School of Jewish Learning 5778 team of educators (and I mean “educators” in every sense of the word), without whose efforts we would be a lesser community:

Marci Braunstein	Walker Heller
Tyler Braunstein	Deb KalisherCantor Lazar
Shira Dubin	Suzi Marr
Debbie Fesinstine	Hannah Perfetti
Jill Fesinstine	Adam Tucker
Sofia Goldfarb	

In addition, it is my honor to include Ashley Braunstein, Emma Kahan, and Molly Kahan, each of whom has transitioned over the past few weeks from “student” to “madricha” (teaching assistant) after becoming Bat Mitzvah. Their transitions have been seamless, and we are grateful for the added passion they bring to our school.

And finally, I would be remiss were I not to recognize our entire parent body, without whose ongoing support our school could not function. You are appreciated.

As we begin to plan for next year, we do so with excitement and anticipation and gratitude for the opportunity to serve the next generation.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Dubin